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TREASON TO WHITENESS IS LOYALTY TO HUMANITY

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The editors apologize to Keith A. Eaton, author of the poem, High Voltage, whose name was given erroneously in issue 11.

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Cover photo: Black Panther Party rally to free Huey Newton, Oakland, August 1968—photo: R.M. Baruch and P. Jones.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

The white race is a historically constructed social formation. It consists of all those who partake of the privileges of the white skin in this society. Its most wretched members share a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it, in return for which they give their support to a system that degrades them.

The key to solving the social problems of our age is to abolish the white race, that is, to abolish the privileges of the white skin. Until that task is accomplished, even partial reform will prove elusive, because white influence permeates every issue, domestic and foreign, in U.S. society.

The existence of the white race depends on the willingness of those assigned to it to place their racial interests above class, gender, or any other interests they hold. The defection of enough of its members to make it unreliable as a predictor of behavior will lead to its collapse.

Race Traitor aims to serve as an intellectual center for those seeking to abolish the white race. It will encourage dissent from the conformity that maintains it and popularize examples of defection from its ranks, analyze the forces that hold it together and those that promise to tear it apart. Part of its task will be to promote debate among abolitionists. When possible, it will support practical measures, guided by the principle, **Treason to whiteness is loyalty to humanity.**

EDITORIAL:
REALITY AND THE FUTURE

Not once upon a time, but once again, an assault on the rights of Afro-Americans is the story. The widespread denial of voting rights to the black citizens of Florida in the 2000 presidential election should remind all of two previous presidential elections—those of 1876 and 1964.

The 1876 election, pitting the Democrat Samuel Tilden against the Republican Rutherford B. Hayes, eventually resulted in a deal to withdraw federal troops from the states still under reconstruction after the Civil War. That withdrawal opened the door for the nightriders of the Ku Klux Klan and other groups to mount a campaign of terror against the freed slaves and their children and for the plantation owners to install and enforce a system of sharecropping that differed but little from the slave system that the war had been fought to end. It took this country more than seventy-five years to recover from the Hayes-Tilden Compromise.

It required the Civil Rights revolution of the post World War II era to recover federal protections for Afro-American rights. But, as should be well-known, that revolution faced stubborn opposition from the defenders of Jim Crow and segregation. Although by 1964 the Democratic Party had emerged as the one of the two parties more formally committed to equal rights, the party remained dominated by the Dixiecrats—the Democrats in the South committed to preserving segregation. In 1964, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) held free and open nominating conventions across the state to elect delegates to the Democratic National Convention who would be pledged to end unequal treatment within the Party. When the delegates of the MFDP arrived at the Convention in Atlantic City, they were met not only by opposition from the segregationists but by their supposed supporters in the Party's liberal wing. None other than the liberal hero, Hubert Humphrey (later to be the losing Democratic candidate in 1968), was sent out to inform the freedom fighters that there would be no room for them at the Convention.

Two lessons from the past—the first from a time when the Democratic Party supported taking rights away from black people and the second from a time when it was supposed to be in favor of restoring them.

And what can we learn from 2000? It seems clear that the one thing

that Al Gore and the architects of his post-election campaign to win Florida refused to do was to make the widespread disenfranchisement of black citizens the centerpiece of his argument. Someday, perhaps, we'll read in his memoirs of his sleepless nights as he reluctantly decided to turn his back on the outraged voices of the people of Florida. In the meantime, it would be wise to recognize that the Democrats of 2001 remain prepared to do whatever they think necessary to preserve the larger stability of the country that they rule over with the Republicans.

At the same time, it is of course black folks who voted for Al Gore or who wanted to vote for Al Gore who are raising the demand that justice be done. Is there a way to reconcile a conviction that the Democrats are part of the problem with an unqualified support for the demands of those who supported those same Democrats. In 1958, in *Facing Reality*, C.L.R. James and colleagues urged those who wanted to promote radical change to have "an attitude of respect for the Negro people and their ideas." They went on to say:

> Great changes in recent American society, the greatest of which has been the organization of the C.I.O., have been the motive force creating new attitudes to race relations among Negroes and whites. But it is the Negroes who have broken all precedents in the way they have used the opportunities thus created. In the course of the last twenty years they have formed the March on Washington Committee which extorted Executive Order 8802 from the Roosevelt Government. This was the order which gave the Negroes an invaluable weapon in the struggle to establish their right to a position in the plants. Negro soldiers, in every area of war, and sometimes on the battlefield itself, fought bloody engagements against white fellow soldiers, officers, generals, and all, to establish their rights as equal American citizens....
>
> The Negroes in the North and West, by their ceaseless agitation and their votes, are now a wedge jammed in between the Northern Democrats and the Southern. At any moment this wedge can split that party into two and compel the total reorganization of American politics.

We still live in the political era established by the split that James and his co-authors anticipated in 1958. All those who yearn to fight for a new world should remember their advice to be respectful and resist the easy

temptation to tell people what they need to know. As James also pointed out in 1958, "If Negroes outside of the South vote, now for the Democratic Party and now for the Republican, they have excellent reasons for doing so, and their general activity shows that large numbers of them see voting and the struggle for Supreme Court decisions merely as one aspect of a totality. They have no illusions."

The world of 2001 is not the same as the one of 1958. But in the same way that the world was re-made and new possibilities created by the Civil Rights Movement that was under way in 1958, we may yet find that the turmoil in Florida allows us once again to face reality and dream the future.

"A FUCKING WHITE REVOLUTIONARY MASS MOVEMENT" AND OTHER FABLES OF WHITENESS[1]

BY DAVID BARBER

Aftershocks from the nation's last great period of social upheaval—the 1960s—continue to disturb the United States' political, social and cultural landscapes. While important histories have focused on the early years of that decade, the period of the civil rights movement's ascendancy, very few scholars have seriously analyzed its final years, those years following the black movement's turn to black power. Yet these were the years of greatest tumult: huge ghetto uprisings shook the nation; militant black activists openly brandished weapons and called for revolutionary change; student strikes, demonstrations, riots and even bombings became a regular feature on the evening news; both Democrats and Republicans convened their national Presidential nominating conventions in cities under siege, while the antiwar movement toppled a sitting President; and, at the height of their power, the main social movements of the period collapsed.

More than any other organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) represented the trajectory of the white New Left. Beginning its work in earnest in 1960 with 250 members, SDS tapped into the inspirational and moral power of the civil rights movement and slowly mobilized a northern white student constituency.[2] By April 1965, when it organized the first national demonstration against the war in Vietnam, SDS membership had reached 2500. Less than 6 months after that demonstration, SDS membership had quadrupled to 10,000. By June 1966, the month in which Stokely Carmichael first raised the cry "Black Power," SDS membership had soared to 15,000. Thereafter, SDS membership continued its steady upward climb, reaching 25,000 by October 1966, 30,000 by June 1967 and 35,000 by April 1968, the month of the Columbia University rebellion. Once again, in the wake of Columbia, SDS's membership took a qualitative leap, reaching somewhere between 80,000 and 100,000 by the time of 1968's

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presidential election.[3] Yet eight months later SDS split at its June national convention, and, for all intents and purposes, ceased to have an independent existence by the late fall and early winter of 1969. No organization proved capable of stepping forward to take SDS's place.

When, in the spring of 1970, national guard troops fired on and killed unarmed demonstrators at Kent State and subsequently when police did the same thing at Jackson State College in Mississippi, ad hoc groups coordinated the massive national student demonstrations that followed. Without some form of permanent organization, however, the new left had no mechanism for educating its constituency or training its leaders. In consequence, the white new left could not sustain itself.

Understanding how and why SDS and the new left collapsed, then, is the large historical problem I am seeking to examine. As part of that project I will be examining two other large historical questions: first, what distinguished the new left from the old; and second, what does the new left experience tell us about the historical weakness of the left in the United States?

A variety of factors undoubtedly contributed to the new left's collapse. While government repression against and social cooptation of the new left certainly played significant roles in the collapse, in general, repression and cooptation are only successful to the extent to which they can play upon the internal shortcomings of a movement. For the new left those shortcomings were first of all ideological and involved the new left's failure to decisively break with traditional American notions of race, gender, class and nation. While all these shortcomings are inextricably intertwined, for the purposes of this paper I intend to isolate and trace the new left's notions of race. In failing to consistently appreciate and hold to an understanding of their own racialization as young white people new leftists failed to come to terms with the real character of the society in which they lived. Moreover, absent an understanding of their whiteness new leftists could not appreciate the myriad forms in which white supremacist ideology could insinuate itself into their consciousness and practice. In this paper then I will argue that the new left collapsed largely because it was unable to successfully break with traditional white American modes of thought and practice.

America's longstanding white supremacist ideology and practice could not retain its overtly racist form following the Second World War. But if it could not retain that form, neither could the United States surrender its white supremacist ideology. The United States had just won

the power to define the terms of development for hundreds of millions of people on the planet. Its problem was to hold on to the power, but present itself as a force for freedom and "modernization." Thus the U.S. would depict its white supremacy in the most innocuous and universalist forms: America would teach the rest of the world to follow in its footsteps to prosperity and freedom. It would be the model for the world, and America's white man, the model for America. White supremacy was not to be so much asserted as assumed. The proof and guarantee of white superiority was in the structure of the world. To be sure, this was not new, but it did represent a shift in emphasis.

Here then was white supremacy's template for America's new left activists. They had come of age at a time in which their country had unprecedented power in the world. Their schools, their families, the movies and television they watched, the magazines and newspapers and comic books they read, all groomed them for their rightful place as leaders of the world, and of humanity. This was the white supremacist ideology that new leftists would have to overcome if they were to make a significant contribution to social change in the United States.

Historiography

Historiography for the period generally breaks down into three schools: a liberal, radical and postmodernist school.[4] Historians of all these schools generally acknowledge that the civil rights movement played an essential role in the new left's development. Thus, for example, historians agree that the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project trained the activists who subsequently led the nation's first great new left student struggle in the 1960s—the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in the fall of 1964.[5] The liberal school also argues that the black movement's turn to black power was key to the new left's decline. Frustrated by the slow pace of change and by racism's seeming intractability, black activists gave up on their commitment to an interracial movement and adopted a politics of rage. White activists, barred from anything but a secondary role in the black struggle, and also frustrated by the government's unresponsiveness to their demands to end the Vietnam War, increasingly embraced the black movement's politics of rage and uncritically supported black power. Thus, the liberal historians basically argue that the movement failed because it was too radical.[6]

The radical, or New Left historiography, takes a less clear view of the basis for the New Left's collapse. On the whole, the radical school

continues to defend the new left's articulated ideals, but it fails to subject the new left's practice and theory to the kind of analysis that would distinguish between those stated ideals and the real content of new left practice. In other words, the radical historiography measures the new left by what it said about itself, rather than what it did.[7]

Only in their treatment of the new left's male-centered practice do radical historians offer a telling critique of the new left. In his case study of Austin's new left, for example, radical historian Doug Rossinow does suggest that the new left's view of gender was only a modified mainstream view. Consequently, he suggests that the New Left failed because it never really transcended society's vision of gender relations. This view, of course, follows the lead of radical feminist historians like Alice Echols. But neither Rossinow nor Echols casts the same critical eye on the new left's racial understandings.[8]

In contrast to the liberal and radical schools, I argue that the black movement was indeed central to the rise and fall of the new left, but not in the manner depicted by mainstream historiography. On the one hand, the black movement challenged white activists to understand *themselves* as racially defined. Prior to black power, for example, SDS and the old left simply assumed that they would lead the struggle for social change by virtue of their being representatives of the "universal" American, who was necessarily white. As late as mid-June 1966, for example, SDS's national secretary Paul Booth was modestly proclaiming that "...SDS has been the most creative and relevant factor on the Left..." But SDS leaders could make such a claim only if they viewed SNCC as a particular in the constellation of the American political universe—the representatives of the American Negro, or the "struggle in the South," as Booth had put it two weeks earlier. SNCC's projects, which included the Mississippi Summer Project, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party challenge, the Lowndes County Black Panther Party, as well as early and clear positions against the Vietnam War, repeatedly shook the nation and inspired and challenged SDS. Within days of Booth's claims SNCC raised the call for "Black Power" in the Meredith March Against Fear, and decisively shifted the course of the struggle for social change in the United States.[9]

When SNCC's black activists asked new leftists to organize in the white community against white racism, they fundamentally challenged white liberal, charitable and paternalist modes of operating. White leftists could no longer unproblematically "help" black people. On the contrary, SNCC activists began telling the young whites that blacks emphatically

did not want or need their help; rather than feeling good about helping others, white activists had to take responsibility for themselves and for the communities from which they came. Thus, SNCC began to define the role of people who, in the past, had always had the privilege of defining their own role and relation to others. The foundations of a consciousness of the "normalcy of whiteness"—which included the power to define—thus began to wobble as black people intensified their social activity and consciousness of self. In a February 1967 paper he titled "In White America: Radical Consciousness and Social Change," SDS national secretary Greg Calvert reflected the new consciousness dawning in SDS. Said Calvert in his paper:

> We owe SNCC a deep debt of gratitude for having slapped us brutally in the face with the slogan of black power, a slogan which said to white radicals: 'Go home and organize in white America which is *your* reality and which only you are equipped to change.' ...
>
> The liberal reformist is always engaged in 'fighting someone else's battles.' His struggle is involved in relieving the tension produced by the contradictions between his own existence and life-style, his self-image, and the conditions of existence and life-style, of those who do not share his privileged, unearned status. ...
>
> The problem in white America is the failure to admit or recognize unfreedom. ... Only when white America comes to terms with its own unfreedom can it participate in the creation of a revolutionary movement.[10]

Even Calvert's title represented something new and different. Until SNCC called for black power no "white left" existed in a place called "white America."

If the new left was part of a revolution in the 1960s, then, here was its content: white Americans began to understand themselves as racialized subjects and not as the models for other, non-white peoples, to emulate.

On the other hand, the new left proved that it could sustain this kind of self-reflection and practice only so long as the black movement was capable of continually prodding it. Repeatedly, SDS, on the national and on the local levels, found itself focusing on racial issues in the wake of important black struggles; and just as repeatedly, SDS placed race on the back burner when black organizations faltered or when the black social

movement paused to catch its breath. Thus, for example, Berkeley SDS quickly convened "Black Power Day" within a few short weeks of September 1966 black rioting in San Francisco. In its prospectus and propaganda for the event SDS expressed a clear appreciation for the historical significance of the black power turn and a clear understanding of the tasks that the black movement placed upon white radicals. In the proposal for the event, SDS leaders argued that:

> The change in the Negro Movement from 'civil rights' and 'integration' to the organization of black people into an independent power bloc, may be the most significant development for change in America in decades. ... White radicals should create the best possible platform, within the white population, for Black Power advocates and the activists in this growing movement.[11]

If the transition from civil rights to black power was the "most significant development for change in America in decades" in October 1966, by late November, Northern California regional SDS apparently had moved on to other, still more significant things. In its circular inviting people to the SDS national conference, SDS leaders made no clear reference to any conference discussion or workshops on the white left's relation to the black struggle.[12]

Thus, I intend to demonstrate that the struggle between two opposing tendencies defined the new left's trajectory and ultimately defined its demise. In those periods when the black movement was particularly strong and particularly clear in its own understandings, white new leftists came to understand race in ways that few whites had ever been able to understand it in the past. During those times new leftists sought a new practice that would break with the privilege of race. On the other hand, traditional white national culture's views of race continually pulled at and distorted these new understandings. And, whenever the black movement faltered, the majority of new leftists reverted to old patterns of racial thought: most frequently ignoring the black struggle; subsuming it under the "more important" class struggle; or assuming a "more revolutionary than thou" posture.[13]

In contrast to liberal historiography for the period, which holds that the new left failed because it was too radical, I hold that the new left failed because it was not radical enough. By the end of the 1960s, as the black movement came under a concerted government attack, the new left had

reverted to mainstream American understandings of race. True, the new left had modified these mainstream understandings to make them compatible with the narrative of struggles that it had participated in; but the basic understanding was still a traditional one in which activists no longer questioned their white racial identity, assumed that it was natural, and took on the "leading role" that that identity always conferred on white people. Weatherman based its decision to scuttle SDS and go underground wholly on this belief. In short, the new left failed not because it radically separated itself from America's mainstream. Rather, it failed because it came to mirror that mainstream and in mirroring traditional American racial attitudes, it ceased to be a left.

Black Power Emerges

The civil rights movement provided the early training ground for the new left and created the initial social motion which broke through the McCarthy era-imposed years of quiet. The movement itself, nevertheless, had a liberal ideological foundation. In other words, the civil rights movement operated within the myth of the "American dream": racism was an aberration, untrue to the foundation and principles upon which Americans had constructed their freedom. Consequently, new leftists in the civil rights movement had no need to question their racial identities. By mid-1966, however, the black struggle had reached a decisive turning point. Even after winning major civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965, and successfully overturning segregation as a *de jure* system in the United States, black people still faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles to social progress. In short, the black movement had tested the liberal hypothesis on race relations and found it wanting. In its stead, the black movement discovered a system of white supremacy that defined American life and history. Thus did black people come to challenge American liberal ideology and the racial identities on which that ideology rested. Since black racial identity was central to the formation, development and existence of white racial identity, however, blacks could not challenge their place in America's racial hierarchy without calling into question white racial identity.[14]

In June 1966 as civil rights marchers crossed the state of Mississippi in a "March Against Fear," the movement came to a decisive crossroads. On the evening of June 16 Stokely Carmichael, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee addressed a crowd of marchers and local residents in Greenwood. Having just been released from jail,

Carmichael angrily told the rally: "This is the 27th time I have been arrested. I ain't going to jail no more! I ain't going to jail no more! ... We want Black Power!" "What do we want?" Carmichael called. "Black Power!" came back the response. "What do we want?" "Black Power!"[15]

It was an electrifying slogan. Most important, Black Power represented not just SNCC's experience, but the experience of masses of black people in the South and in the North. As if to punctuate Stokely's cry, urban rebellions swept the nation in the weeks following the March: Omaha, Chicago and Cleveland in July 1966; Brooklyn in August; Milwaukee, Dayton, Waukegan, Benton Harbor, Michigan and Jackson, Mississippi in early September; and San Francisco and Oakland in late September and early October.[16]

In the fall of 1966 Carmichael authored a number of widely circulated articles in which he clarified the meaning, significance and origin of Black Power. In these articles and in speeches he gave at the time he laid out a stinging indictment of the United States and of the prospects for liberal reform and integration.[17] Blacks constituted a colonial people living within the borders of the U.S., explained Carmichael. A powerful few exploited this colony and all the U.S. colonies, stretching "from Mississippi and Harlem to South America, the Middle East, southern Africa, and Vietnam" in order to enrich themselves. Racism originated in the need to hide and rationalize this exploitation. Consequently, Carmichael averred, "for racism to die, a totally different America must be born."

White society did not want to face this reality and so it preferred to talk about "integration." Even at its at best, however, integration could only mean that the few blacks who had made it could leave the ghetto and its impoverished people behind. Worse, Carmichael continued, integration was

> based on complete acceptance of the fact that *in order to have* a decent house or education blacks must move into a white neighborhood or send their children to a white school. This reinforces, among both black and white, the idea that 'white' is automatically better and 'black' by definition inferior. This is why integration is a subterfuge for the maintenance of white supremacy.

Thus, Carmichael indicted America as a colonial power; tied together Latin America, South Africa, Vietnam and the plight of black people; and labeled integration an instrument for maintaining white supremacy.

What were the practical implications of this anti-colonial analysis of race? On the one hand, for a variety of reasons black people needed to organize themselves, independently of whites. Psychologically, "only black people can convey the revolutionary idea that black people are able to do things themselves." Because they did not understand this psychological reality friendly whites actually had "furthered white supremacy" without realizing or wanting it. But in insisting that blacks be free to organize themselves independently of whites, black people did not seek to deny white friends and allies. They only sought the right to choose who were their friends and who were their enemies. Moreover, Carmichael insisted, black people "cannot have the oppressors tell the oppressed how to rid themselves of the oppressor."

On the other hand, white supporters had to take a different role, a role that they had been reluctant to take up until then: they needed to "go into their own communities—which is where the racism exists—and work to get rid of it." Instead of going into black communities and preaching nonviolence there, white organizers should be going into white communities and teaching white people the value of nonviolence. Thus, Carmichael argued, the possibility of a real coalition between poor blacks and and poor whites depended upon the work of white organizers; blacks could help white activists in this task, but this was the white responsibility.[18]

Speaking in October before a predominantly white crowd of 13,000 at his Berkeley "Black Power Day Conference" speech, Carmichael argued the same line in still sharper fashion.[19] Can whites, asked Carmichael, "move inside their *own* community and start tearing down racism *where in fact it does exist! Where it exists!*" White people were the people who lived in Cicero, Illinois—where Martin Luther King had recently been stoned; whites prevented black people from living in that community; and whites were the people who forced blacks to live in ghettos. Could the white organizer "be a man who's willing to move into the *white* community and start organizing where the organization is needed. [sic] Can he do that? (Shouts and applause)"[20]

SNCC, Carmichael continued, was raising fundamental questions about the United States. Indeed, to those who suggested that blacks simply wanted a piece of the American pie, Carmichael answered:

> The American pie means *raping* South Africa, *beating* Vietnam, *beating* South America, *raping the Phillippines* [sic], *raping*

> *every country you've been in ... I don't want any of your blood-money*—I don't want it! Don't want to be *part* of that system! And the question is how do *we* raise those questions ... how do *we* raise them. [sic] (Great applause. 'Go ahead. Bravo.')

How did America become the wealthiest country in the world, Carmichael asked? By pillaging other countries, he answered. And how then could America's youth stop this plunder and start creating a genuinely humane community? By moving into and transforming the white community, he answered. Black people were already building the kind of movement that would humanize America. "The challenge," Carmichael concluded, "is that the white activist has failed miserably to develop the movement inside of his community. ... can we find white people who are going to have the courage to go into white communities and start organizing them?"[21]

Thus did the black movement's most militant sector challenge white liberalism and white radical activists.

On the surface, SDS's national office responded immediately, clearly and unequivocally in support of SNCC's turn to black power. Within a week of Carmichael's first raising the Black Power demand, SDS had issued a statement in support of SNCC. Written by former SDS president Todd Gitlin, the statement affirmed that SDS supported more than SNCC's simple right to choose black power as its direction; SDS "welcomed" and "supported" SNCC's new direction. Black Power, SDS argued, was both a "strategy for social change and a mode of organization." When the United States was understood as an "essentially racist culture" then this strategy and mode of organization made sense. White society discriminated against and exploited blacks as a group. Consequently, blacks "must act as a group in order to challenge their condition." Moreover, though white society discriminated against blacks, it insisted that blacks "seek their salvation in integration—that is, in accommodation to the dominant social values, under white leadership." Thus, SDS affirmed the wisdom of black people organizing black people on black terms.

But what of the charge, raised by critics of the black power turn, that any black power strategy would fail given the fact that blacks were a minority? Responsibility for such a failure would lie not with SNCC, SDS answered, but with "those whites who fail to build white movements that can at some point ally with the black movement for common goals." White critics therefore must understand and take up their true task:

"organizing primarily among the powerless, the disenfranchised, the dependent whites," building up their power in a variety of spheres—community organizations, unions, professional associations. Only on such a foundation, SDS argued, would it be possible for white activists to build a real coalition with poor blacks and reconstruct American life with new, more humane principles.[22]

Yet SDS's national position failed to define explicitly the content of whites organizing whites: that whites must be organized against racism. Even if that position was implicit, however, the national statement still concealed three things: first, divergent local SDS and new left understandings of SNCC and Black Power; second, SDS's three-year-old nation-wide commitment to building an "interracial movement of the poor"; and third, SDS's long-standing self-conception as the vanguard for social change in America.

Outside of the national office, local chapter and project understandings of the black power turn were uneven and weak on the crucial point of anti-racist organizing. Indeed, the majority of new leftists failed to appreciate black power's imperative for anti-racist organizing in the white community. Radical historian and well-known new leftist, Staughton Lynd, and founding SDS member, Richard Flacks, for example, both took what would become a fairly representative position on black power's implications for white activists. Said Lynd: "what SNCC is saying is: 'Blacks should be organized by blacks, and what white organizers do is something for white organizers to decide.'"[23] Several years later Lynd would look back on the black power turn and see in it the origins of the white radical determination to focus on anti-draft work. According to Lynd, white civil rights movement veterans "wanted to retain a politics of daring, but wanted to get away from the role of ... auxiliary to a radicalism [whose] center of gravity was in other people's lives." White radicals sought after something "which would have the same spirit, ask as much of us, and challenge the system as fundamentally as had our work in Mississippi."[24] In short, Lynd failed to appreciate *that* SNCC's black power demand defined not just the work of black activists, but white activists' work as well. Neither did Lynd understand that the battle against racism and for the liberation of black people was *not* auxiliary to white radicals, but stood at the very center of their work. The battle against racism was central because it was the battle to win white people to an understanding of their own racialization; that is, it was the battle to understand the structure of the society in which whites lived, to

understand privilege and to understand class. In other terms, if whites did not understand their racialization, they would have to believe that their condition, relative to black people, was natural. Thus, under-standing their racialization was the prerequisite to understanding the social relationships of their society.

Since 1963 SDSers had been organizing in both white and black urban communities throughout the North with their Economic Research and Action Projects (ERAP). They had founded ERAP in self-conscious imitation of SNCC's work in the south and SNCC's intellectual leadership had inspired and shaped the project's organizing style and content. Long before Black Power, as early as the fall of 1963, SNCC's black activists were already arguing that whites should be organizing in the white community. Thus, when SDS leaders Tom Hayden and Todd Gitlin first proposed ERAP at the September 1963 SDS national council meeting they were already being pushed to orient the project towards poor white organizing.[25] Although SDS leaders were seemingly receptive to that charge, and sought to establish the first ERAP project in a poor white community in Chicago, they nevertheless resisted following the black nationalist lead and actively sought to send white student organizers into black communities. Years later Tom Hayden acknowledged that both he and Carl Wittman, Hayden's coauthor on ERAP's main theoretical document, "An Interracial Movement of the Poor?", had fashioned ERAP at least in part as a response to Malcolm X's growing influence in the civil rights movement. The two young white men were eager, in Hayden's words, "to prove that at least some whites weren't 'devils'" and that "an integrationist perspective stressing common economic interests could still work."[26] Thus, from its earliest days, ERAP bore an equivocal relationship to the black nationalist tendency then rising within the civil rights movement. And, while it agreed in theory on the necessity for white activists to be organizing poor white people, this equivocal relationship to Malcolm's leadership and SNCC's growing black nationalism pushed SDSers into a practical disunity with the notion that blacks should organize blacks. Thus, the majority of ERAP efforts, including both Hayden's Newark project and Wittman's Chester, Pennsylvania project, were in black communities.[27]

Wittman's Chester project became ERAP's first success story and model for future organizing efforts.[28] Yet between 1964 and 1966 Chester's black community leadership, like black leadership across the U.S., transformed its consciousness from liberal civil rights consciousness

to black power consciousness. Concomitant with that change, Chester's ERAP project evolved into a chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a national civil rights organization that also made the transition to black power. In an open letter to ERAP penned in the summer of 1966, Donald Jackson, Chester CORE's chair, vehemently denounced ERAP's white arrogance. Jackson maintained that all the problems of black people "have their roots in American racism" and that that racism was "a tool of economic exploitation, a means to political power, and a system of psychological gratification." But, argued Jackson, ERAP had never really come to terms with that truth. Consequently, white ERAPers continued to organize in black ghettos, bringing with them a baleful influence: they reinforced "dependency patterns among blacks"; introduced "alien goals into the black struggle"; presumed the superiority of white people's view of black problems to black people's view of those problems; recklessly and inhumanly trifled "with black individuals, persons who are the most psychologically vulnerable"; and stifled the "development of independent black organizations ... the only realistic safeguard for black people against white society."[29] In short, Jackson denounced ERAP organizers for retaining the common white belief in white intellectual superiority and for holding an implicit disbelief in the ability of blacks to organize themselves.

Even those projects located in white communities, however, failed to take up the Black Power challenge that whites organize whites against racism. The largest ERAP effort aimed at poor whites, Chicago's JOIN (Jobs or Income Now), had some success in creating alliances with black groups, but prior to 1967 did not explicitly make anti-racist organizing a central tenet of its work. Instead, JOIN activists sought to organize people by trying to help them with their immediate problems. By so focusing their work JOIN organizers hoped to gain people's trust while at the same time raising larger questions about the nature, organization and power relations of the society. One of JOIN's leading organizers, Mike James, described the general organizing rap he used in the summer of 1966:

> Ya know, workers in factories and the men in the mines back home [in Appalachia] had a tough time of it. They found that the only way they could get any justice was by getting together in a group that had some power. ... If you ain't got money, the welfare, these landlords who charge high rents for rotten places, and these slave labor hiring halls all push you around. If you're

> poor your kids gotta go to that Stewart school, while the rich kids over by the lake got that fancy Brenneman. ... It's just like in the mines. The only way that people from the south, the little guy, is going to get any justice is by sticking together, forming a strong union and getting some power to make the welfare, the landlords, the cops, the schools and the stores respect us.[30]

Thus, two months after Carmichael first publicly demanded Black Power, JOIN organizers were not yet defining racism as a principal problem confronting white people. At bottom, JOIN's SDS organizers failed to appreciate that race was not simply something that affected black people, or a problem that originated among white people, but was itself a central part of white people's oppression.[31] Consequently, JOIN organizers sought to organize Appalachian whites against their own oppression in Chicago without drawing any necessary connection to the relation that these southern whites had to black people.

Still, a more important obstacle stood in the way of SDS's ability to appreciate Black Power's significance to white activists: SDS's long-held belief that it, SDS, stood as the vanguard of social change in the United States. On any number of levels this view accorded with the traditional self-conceptions of white social activists and the white population in general. Prior to the 1960s, the power that whiteness held over people in the United States lay in its unexamined, or seemingly natural character.[32] Few people questioned the notion that white people were the "normal" Americans, while blacks and Latinos were somehow special cases, if they were Americans at all. This view of what was "normal" and what was particular carried over into social activism. Black people might have a particular fight against racism, but whites, unencumbered by any particular racial distinctions, would lead the struggle for social change on more universal grounds.[33]

As race invisibly shaped the individual white activist's consciousness, so it shaped the collective new left's consciousness. Even in the face of the civil rights movement's growing power and the national and international controversy that it generated, SDS persisted in seeing its work as the central work for social change in the United States. Thus, for example, at its December 1965 national conference, SDS national secretary Paul Booth and former national secretary Lee Webb delineated the elements that would forge a "radical politics" in the United States:

> It will be on the bedrock of the demands of the poor for an

> income, Negroes for an end to racism and economic discrimination, students and faculty for control over their own universities, that this movement will be built. ... Their demands will rock the very foundations of the domestic concensus [sic] on which our foreign policy rests. This attack ... will announce the beginnings in this country of a real movement for a democratic society.[34]

Montgomery, the black student sit-in movement of 1960, the freedom rides, Albany, Birmingham, Selma, the Mississippi Freedom Summer, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the numerous martyrs of the civil rights movement, and the destruction of *de jure* segregation in the United States: in the eyes of SDS leaders these signal events did not "announce the beginnings ... of a real movement for a democratic society." No, this was simply Negroes battling against racism. The real movement for a democratic society would wait on new leftists and the kinds of coalitions that they might forge.

In short, SDS envisioned a division of labor in the struggle for social change. Black people and the civil rights movement would be responsible for the struggle against racism and would be one element in SDS's radical coalition. SDS would be responsible for everything else. Working through ERAP, SDS would mobilize the urban poor—which included both blacks and whites; working on campuses, SDS would mobilize students and faculty; and, working through the anti-war movement, SDS would bring these disparate elements together and build a radical movement.[35]

If SDS's vision relegated the black struggle and the struggle against racism to a single portion of SDS's projected radical coalition, nevertheless some people believed that blacks were *part* of the most important portion—"the poor." Thus, one early accounting of SDS's prospective radical agents included "the poor, the unemployed, the dissedent [sic] workers both organized and unorganized." Other SDS leaders, however, envisioned radical change being centered somewhere else entirely—"the middle class—the group most important to changing the society."[36] Said SDS's principal founder, Al Haber: "The problems of the 'affluent' in America—union members, professionals, the broad middle class, the intelligensia, etc.—are in many ways more pressing and serious than those of the underclass."[37] Of course, in this vision, SDS became even more central to the struggle for social change, and black people became even more peripheral.

Even as SNCC turned self-consciously to black nationalism and revolution, SDS leaders continued their attempts at marginalizing SNCC, making it only a single element of the national work of social change. In an open letter to SNCC sent two weeks prior to Carmichael's call for Black Power SDS's national secretary Paul Booth defended SNCC from escalating liberal attacks. Such criticisms, Booth argued, really represented a larger and deeper problem—"the relation of the liberal community to movements for social change." Booth then acknowledged SNCC in a characteristic way:

> We have followed SNCC's evolution for years, learning from it, adapting its approaches in our own organizing efforts, and acting as allies when called upon to assist the struggle in the South. And as SNCC and the movement in which you work have taken more explicitly political approaches to organizing, we have welcomed this as a sign of the strength of those movements, and as evidence of real possibilities for social change.[38]

By identifying SNCC with "the struggle in the South," Booth was continuing to view SNCC within SDS's framework of social change. SNCC's principal base of operation indeed may have been the South, but even in 1965 and early 1966 SNCC clearly identified itself as an organization which represented the aspirations of black people. Moreover, the civil rights struggle in the South repeatedly had shaken the nation and affected the world. And Harlem in 1964 and Watts in 1965 had already announced that the black struggle transcended "the South." Finally, by "welcoming" what SDS discerned as SNCC's increasingly political approach to struggle, SDS positioned itself as an elder and wiser brother, approving the younger brother's growing maturity.

SDS thus held tightly to its white perceptions of racelessness and the consequent centrality of white activists to social change. Nevertheless, SNCC's black power turn opened new possibilities of understanding for new leftists. First, following SNCC's lead SDS activists began to develop and use new terminology, terminology that racialized white people. Second, a handful of individual activists grasped Black Power's significance and quite correctly began to argue that racism affected whites and was part of their identity. Third, black nationalist analysis began to reshape how new leftists saw the process of social change. And finally, in a number of localities, SDS chapters began to raise the significance of black power to a wider public.

With black power's rise, references to "white radicals" and the "white power structure" appeared in new left discussions for the first time, even if such references continued to coexist with notions of building a racially undifferentiated radical movement. By calling themselves *white* radicals, new leftists displayed an embryonic understanding of their own racialization. Even a single year earlier white leftists had called themselves simply "radicals," or "leftists" or "new leftists." As such, they envisioned for themselves the widest possible roles in the creation of a new society. In contrast, black people *first* had to overcome the barriers of race in order to achieve their humanity. Unracialized, "raceless" radicals had no such obstacles in front of them and thus could stand fully in the forefront of the struggle for a humanized world. Now, as *white* radicals, their options had narrowed; they could no longer enter black communities and expect to be welcomed in an unequivocal fashion. Now, for the first time, and as much as they might resist it, other people were defining the nature of social change.

Some new leftist activists quickly grasped Black Power's significance. Spelman College history professor Robin Brooks, for example, appreciated that Black Power had the potential for shaking up the new left's worldview. In his coverage of a July 1966 speech by black poet and dramatist LeRoi Jones, Brooks offered *New Left Notes* readers their first full analysis of black power. Jones' speech had argued that blacks "were a captive people, brought here against their will." Their liberation demanded two things: a recovery of their own culture and an identification with the anti-colonial revolutions going on in the world. On the first score, blacks were a spiritual people, whereas white culture, western culture, represented "a debased and dying materialism ... devoid of spirituality". Blacks "would not be free until they threw off this culture and resumed their heritage." Secondly, black power was part of the "struggle of colored peoples all over the world" against "the West, led by white America". This was a struggle that would not be conducted non-violently; indeed, following Frantz Fanon, revolutionary violence was a key to the process of enobling the oppressed. And, "some day the colored majority of the world's people would confront their oppressor."[39] Thus, Brooks offered SDS members a strikingly new, far more violent, and quite possibly far more realistic vision of social change. Certainly, it was a vision that accorded far more closely to the contemporary racial scene than did the nonviolent vision that most SDSers had entered the movement with.

But Brooks did not stop there. Following Jones's argument, Brooks

accurately perceived that black power threatened the self-identification and activity of both white liberals and white radicals. Black Power, Brooks explained, stripped away one of the main ways in which liberals justified their own behavior: "their sense of benevolence. If we cannot help the Negro to attain equality, with our money—and with our lives, if need be—what can we do? What does the social worker do when he has no more clients?" Black Power similarly confronted white radicals. What were young men and women who had risked their lives during the Mississippi Freedom Summer to do now that they could "no longer participate in the councils of their former black comrades?" Brooks reported that Jones refused to give any answer to that question. Nevertheless, Brooks gave his own answer to the question as he understood the answers that Malcolm and SNCC had already given:

> Don't tell us about how this world is being run and misrun ... we know. If you have something to say, tell it to your white brothers. Set up Freedom School for the white liberals and for the white racists; talk to the lily-white trade unionists and to the politicians who are drafting colored boys to die in Viet Nam for the democracy they don't have here.

Here was a clear understanding of what black activists were asking white activists to take on. But what if revolution broke out before these anti-racist freedom schools had had time to work? Brooks argued that white radicals needed to follow the lead of the few French Algerians who sided with the Algerian struggle: disrupt the morale of the forces of repression, impede the counter-revolution, even blow up "power plants and police stations." This was a far more radical vision of what whites needed to be doing than anything that SDS had hitherto discussed.

Brooks concluded his analysis of black power and the tasks it imposed on white radicals with language reminiscent of James Baldwin's powerful words at the end of *The Fire Next Time*.[40] The times through which they were passing were unique, Brooks reminded his readers. How much time before the final world conflict began could not be known. But white radicals dare not squander the opportunity that lay before them. With conscientious work and "the help of black power and the Viet Cong" white radicals might "manage to accomplish the miracle."

> If we do, then we may have entitled ourselves to some share, in keeping with our real merits and numbers, in the reconstruction

> of a world in which love and non-violence prevail. But there are no short cuts. That is what LeRoi Jones, in his own way, may be telling us.[41]

Thus, in contrast to rhetoric that all too often inflated SDS's role in the struggle for social change, Brooks interjected a rare note of humility and proffered a model of change in which whites were not the center of social action. On the contrary, Brooks suggested that they were in the rear and would have extremely difficult work to do if they were to play any significant role at all.

At least three SDS chapters—Berkeley, Stanford and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln chapters—took Black Power seriously enough to organize major conferences on the subject. All three conferences occurred at the end of October 1966 and campus activists understood their purpose in similar ways. At Berkeley and Stanford, SDS members sought to provide a venue at which proponents of Black Power could present their views, raise money to support SNCC, win a wider understanding of Black Power among whites, and "motivate whites to organize whites." Black Power, one Stanford SDSer noted, "had something positive to say to the white community and to white radicals in particular."[42] At Lincoln 900 people attended the Black Power Conference, whose aim was to win "a clearer understanding of the country's most serious internal problem" and dispel the racist slanders cast against Black Power by national media and politicians.[43] In both the Bay Area events and the Lincoln event, nearby black community rebellions may have spurred on SDS chapters: San Francisco's black community rioted at the end of September 1966 and Omaha, an hour's drive from Lincoln, had gone up in July.

Winter 1966, Spring 1967: Black Power Fades from the New Left's Consciousness

But such events and the kind of thinking engaged in by people like Brooks were as yet only the smallest part of SDS's activity and understanding. Indeed, as Black Power fell from the national headlines most SDS leaders and members returned to more comfortable and familiar notions of themselves and their activity. Thus by November 1966, one Boston SDSer was sufficiently emboldened to launch the first direct attack on Black Power to appear in *New Left Notes*. It was a mistake, claimed the SDSer, for black radicals to attack "white society as a whole." True, "most" whites were strongly prejudiced against blacks,

but this did not mean that most whites would oppose improved living conditions for Negroes. Much smaller groups of whites—slumlords, employers, skilled craft unions, branches of government and boards of education—were really responsible for the actual conditions black people faced. White "suburbanites" would not rally to support slumlords because, according to the Boston SDSer, "the great majority of white suburbanites have no interests, real or perceived, in maintaining bad housing conditions for Negroes."[44] Thus, the Boston SDSer argued that racism was simply a 'bad idea' and was not an integral part of white identity or of the structure of white society.

But SDS leaders discounted Black Power in still more significant ways than such direct opposition. On the one hand, they did not deem the meaning and implications of Black Power important enough for serious discussion at SDS's December 1966 national meeting; and, most characteristically, they returned to their older notions of an "interracial movement of the poor" and SDS's central role in constructing that movement.

In its original plan for SDS's December 1966 national conference, SDS leaders projected workshops in four distinct areas: the labor movement; "developing a Third Party"; Campus Organizing; and Community Organizing. In the community organizing workshops SDS leaders projected discussions that Black Power concerns certainly affected, particularly discussions of poor whites.[45] Nevertheless, if SDS's original June 1966 statement on Black Power had more than a passing significance to SDS; if Black Power truly represented "a strategy for social change and a mode of organization" which correctly reflected the needs imposed by a racist culture upon black people; and if it indeed represented a significant challenge to white radicals, then SDS would have taken a far more explicit approach to Black Power than it actually did. Indeed, SDS projected discussions on the labor movement and on third party organizing, neither of which had had a fraction of the impact that the black movement and Black Power had had on SDS.

Moreover, in its December convention issue of *New Left Notes*, SDS featured an article by Todd Gitlin, "On Organizing the Poor in America." Gitlin, of course, had authored SDS's Black Power resolution six months earlier. Here, however, Gitlin resurrected the old SDS line of subsuming blacks under the rubric of "the poor" and discounted the Black Power demand that white organizers directly challenge racism in the white communities. In his copyrighted article, Gitlin modestly maintained that

while the new left's "international reputation" rested on its antiwar work, its best chance at effecting "lasting political transformation" probably lay with its efforts at organizing the poor. Gitlin retraced SDS's ERAP history and summarized the original reasoning behind SDS's ERAP strategy:

> the civil rights movement was numerically in need of allies; ... that the situation of Negroes was primarily economic and required economic solutions; that the more radical people in the Negro movement were becoming aware of these facts; that the most natural allies for Negroes, therefore, were whites whose condition closely resembled that of Negroes ... poor whites.

But if this was the thinking that lay back of ERAP's origin, Gitlin offered no update of white community organizing based upon SNCC's criticisms and demands. In a footnote to his article Gitlin did acknowledge SNCC insistence that responsibility for organizing poor whites did lie with white radicals. But Gitlin was less forthcoming in discussing the other side of SNCC's understanding: that blacks should organize blacks. Indeed, the former SDS president made no mention of ERAP projects in black communities, like Newark. Instead, Gitlin smuggled black people into his vision by seeing them as poor—and not black, or only incidentally black—as in the pre-Black Power SDS-manner. Thus, for example, Gitlin discussed police brutality as though it were an issue that came out of poor communities, and not the black community specifically. In urban slums, Gitlin explained, the police were "an occupying army"; occupying armies eventually generate resistance, frequently violent resistance. "In American circumstances, the sporadic violent revolts—'riots'—are usually fruitless, though they have proved at least embarrassing," Gitlin generously observed.

On the key point of organizing white communities against racism, Gitlin offered an ambivalent message. Basing himself on JOIN's efforts in Chicago, Gitlin claimed that when organizers cited the civil rights movement's unity as an effective means for attaining goals, they were able to "dismantle, or at least submerge, the racism and privatism of the poor white." Poor whites, Gitlin argued, may not have had a traditional sense of class consciousness, but they did have a "populist" consciousness: they did see the "little people" versus the "big people" and the poor against the rich. This populist consciousness, Gitlin asserted, "may be compelling enough to overpower even Southern white racism." While he could not say

this with any degree of certainty pending more and greater organizing efforts among poor whites, he nevertheless took some "comfort in knowing that the 'interracial movement of the poor' is still a live idea."[46]

The deeper notions that a few SDSers had developed in the immediate wake of Black Power—that racism affected the lives of poor whites and that race shaped the lives of whites as surely as it did the lives of blacks, that white activists were not the center of the struggle for social change, and that blacks played a leading role both in defining the nature of social change in America and in themselves struggling for that change—Gitlin had left all these notions behind.

Thus, by the end of 1966 SDS was well on its way to resuming its pre-Black Power vision of social change. It would not be until the summer of 1967 that black social motion would once again compel SDSers to reexamine their understanding of social change and their own identities as white activists. Indeed, as the first Black Power summer faded from memory, other SDSers joined Gitlin in direct or indirect repudiations of the Black Power demand. First, SDS activists simply forgot Black Power and race as having any significance to their work. At the April 1967 National Council meeting, for example, discussions of race played no significant role in defining SDS activities. Second, some activists directly repudiated the demands that black activists were making on them.

Progressive Labor Party, a faction of growing significance within SDS, offered a most characteristic response to Black Power: race as subordinate to class. This was the Old Left's and labor movement's understanding of race dating back to the Reconstruction period and PL would be the most important representative of that understanding within SDS. To be sure, PL was dogmatic, sectarian and its members faithfully followed the line its leaders laid down. But while these were the visible characteristics that identified PL as an Old Left formation and distinguished PL within SDS, they were not the characteristics that made PL Old Left. Rather, what made PL Old Left was its insistence that twentieth century American social realities, and especially the realities of race, be shoehorned into nineteenth century theoretical constructs. Thus, PL saw the United States as having two fundamental classes: a tiny ruling class and an immense, multiracial working class. Race (and empire) had no reality outside of this class construct. Black people were simply super-exploited workers and racism was merely a trick that the ruling class foisted on the working class in order to keep it divided and powerless. Only the ruling class had any material interest in the degraded

condition of blacks and other non-white peoples. White workers had no short- or long-term stake in racism or in imperialism. In short, PL's position on race was what made PL an old left organization. Since social realities continually ran up against and contradicted these basic tenets of PL's line, PL could sustain itself only through dogmatism, sectarianism and the "discipline" of its members. Thus, PL's line on race created a growing tension within SDS.

As prospects for the "long, hot summer" of 1967 approached, PL proffered a backhanded attack on Black Power analysis in *New Left Notes*. Earl Silbar, a PL activist and a member of Chicago's Roosevelt University SDS chapter, warned SDS activists that, "The government and the mass media ... have been preparing to instigate race wars this summer." According to Silbar the media had falsely portrayed the previous summer's "rebellions" as race riots. In fact, black people "fought cops, bayonets and tanks." "This is a race riot?" Silbar asked rhetorically. "Yes, if cops are a separate race!" Silbar was arguing that blacks were not rebelling against racial oppression, but against class oppression. The media portrayed the rebellions as racial for two reasons: first, the media sought to whip up white workers' racial fears "and divert their energies and pent-up hatreds from their worsening job conditions" and bosses. It was all the more important to whip up these fears, Silbar added, "because of organized workers' evident determination to fight for decent wages and human conditions" in the face of government efforts to enlist their support for the war in Southeast Asia. Second, the media portrayed the rebellions as racial in order to pit "white against black worker" and thereby "crush the militant opposition of black people to the war, its draft and oppressive ghetto conditions in a sea of blood."[47] To a certain extent, Silbar and PL were pursuing the same strategy as Gitlin and the advocates of the interracial movement of the poor, only casting that strategy in more classical Marxist language. PL would not challenge white working class racism, so much as deny that that racism had any real basis. It would seek to convince white workers that blacks were simply fighting the same class enemies that white workers themselves fought. PL thus sought to cover up white workers' long history of helping to construct segregated labor, housing, education and public facilities. The answer to black people's problems, PL argued, thus lay not with Black Power, but with uniting with the white working class and fighting for socialism.

Even mainstream and respected SDSers took similar tacks. At the June 1967 SDS national convention, SDSers Bob Gottlieb, Gerry Tenney

and Columbia SDS's Dave Gilbert offered the main theoretical document, "Toward a Theory of Social Change in America." In their view blacks and other racial minorities, together with the permanently unemployed and underemployed constituted an "underclass." As "the most deprived class in America" the underclass was "one of the centers of radicalism" in the nation and had "been the first to bring forth demands for control and radical change." But, continued the three theoreticians, the underclass was removed "from the sources of power—the centers of production" and therefore could not single-handedly alter American social relations. For that, it would need to ally with the working class.[48] Like PL, these veteran SDSers saw black freedom as contingent upon the ability of blacks to ally with white workers.

SDS was an organization that prided itself on its "non-ideological ideology." By non-ideological it meant something different than Daniel Bell's professions of an end to ideology. It meant simply that SDS prided itself on attempting to derive its theory of social action from the realities of social struggle. This was particularly important to an organization that began its active life at a time when the left in the US had been laid low and when social motion originated not with workers, but with black people. Thus it was all the more striking that Gottlieb, Tenney and Gilbert, and SDS generally, chose not to explore the theoretical and practical implications of Black Power, something new and challenging in America's social and political landscape, but returned instead to a reworked Marxist theory of class struggle as the path to social change in the United States. Evidently, in the absence of an immediate and compelling black social activism and motion, SDS would have a hard time retaining any self-critical vision of its racial identity or understanding of social activism.

Black Power II: "Dancing in the Streets"[49]

Exactly six weeks before assassins took his life, Malcolm X forecast that blood would flow in 1965 in America's cities as it never had before.[50] Six months after his death the black community of Watts in Los Angeles confirmed Malcolm's prediction when it took to the streets in the largest racial riot since 1943. By the time police and national guardsmen subdued the August rebellion, four thousand people were in jail; thirty-four people were dead, most killed by the police; hundreds more had been injured and rioters had destroyed $35 million in property.[51] Malcolm, of course, had no crystal ball when he spoke in January 1965,

nor did he need one. He simply was an attentive observer and committed partisan in the battle then going on for black freedom. In 1964, Malcolm explained, blood had flowed in Harlem, Philadelphia, Rochester and elsewhere. And it would flow in increased volume in 1965 for one reason: the causes that had made it flow in 1963 and in 1964 were still there in 1965.[52] And it continued to flow after 1965. While the summer of 1966 had no single rebellion whose intensity compared to that of Watts, nevertheless black rebellions increased in their extent across the breadth of the nation with over two score of disorders and riots. Two of the largest disturbances occurred in Chicago and Cleveland. In Chicago, site of SDS's national office, city and state officials called out 4200 national guardsmen to quell disturbances in July 1966. National Guard and police arrested over 500 people. Three blacks, including a 13-year-old boy and a pregnant 14-year-old girl were killed by "stray bullets." In rioting in Cleveland a week later, police and white vigilantes killed four blacks.[53]

During the following year, 1967, black rebellions increased in both number and intensity: 150 cities reported disorders and riots in that year—nearly four times the number of cities for the previous year. And in the largest of these rebellions, black communities in Newark and Detroit both erupted within days of each other. In Newark, over a score of people died and rioters destroyed over $10 million in property. In Detroit, police arrested 7,200 people. Police, national guard and army troops murdered 31 people and altogether 43 people died in the riot, with property losses totaling approximately $40 million.[54]

The extent and intensity of this unprecedented black social motion profoundly affected the nation as a whole and particularly SDS's activists. As U.S. paratroopers were withdrawing from their duty in putting down the rebellion in Detroit, for example, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed a National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, the Kerner Commission, to investigate the causes for the rebellions. In forming the commission Johnson called for an attack on "the conditions that breed despair and violence." Nevertheless he reserved his sharpest words for the rioters themselves: if they persisted in their violent and hateful course, they would, he averred, only meet with disaster.[55] On the other hand, SNCC Chairman H. Rap Brown celebrated the rebellions: "We stand on the eve of a black revolution," declared Rap. "These rebellions are but a dress rehearsal for real revolution."[56] For SDS, the black rebellions embodied the black power demand and radically shifted SDS's militancy and rhetoric.[57]

On July 12, 1967 five days and nights of rioting in Newark followed the beating of a black cabdriver, with 1500 arrests and injuries and 26 deaths reported, including two whites, a fireman and policeman.[58] The rebellion could not help but affect SDS. Since 1963 SDS had run NCUP (Newark Community Union Project), an ERAP project in Newark, with white ERAP staffers living in the heart of Newark's black community. White ERAPer Eric Mann recounted the uprising to SDS members. "The riots," Mann reported, "were probably the most popular action that has ever been taken in this community." As he walked down the street on which he lived he was reminded of a block party:

> People were laughing, kids were walking around with new clothes, with new toys. People had a lot of food in their homes, and television sets. The primary demands were quite obviously economic and psycholgical [sic], not political. It was the idea that 'we did it', that 'we screwed all those stores that were taking advantage of us' and also that we got some of the things we wanted and needed.[59]

If Mann did not see anything political in people avenging themselves on those who had exploited them, fellow NCUP staffer Steve Block interpreted events differently. "Black consciousness has been heightened," Block reported. The notion "of black power and black unity now really seem to make sense and to be important." Tom Hayden, also an NCUP staff person, correctly understood that the rioting represented "the assertion of new methods of opposing the racism that politics, nonviolence and community organization have failed to end." While Hayden disavowed the romanticism of those who might see "revolution" in Newark's uprising, he nonetheless maintained that something significant had occurred. Intransigent white American racism was teaching black people "that they must prepare to fight." Thus, slowly the conditions "for an American form of guerrilla warfare based in the slums" were building and the riot signaled that process. Although both liberals and conservatives might condemn the riot and its implications for America's future, Hayden maintained that the riot was nothing less than people making history. True, it was a

> primitive ... form of history making. But if people are barred from using the sophisticated instruments of the established order for their ends, they will find another way. Rocks and bottles are

> only a beginning, but they cause more attention than all the reports in Washington. To the people involved, the riot is far less lawless and far more representative than the system of arbitrary rules and prescribed channels they confront every day. ...
>
> Men are now appearing in the ghettos who might turn the energy of the riot to a more organized and continuous revolutionary direction. ... They understand that the institutions of the white community are unreliable in the absence of black community power. They recognize that national civil rights leaders will not secure the kind of change that is needed. They assume that disobedience, disorder, and even violence must be risked as the only alternative to continuing slavery.[60]

Thus, SDS founder Tom Hayden forecast revolution as one possible issue of the nation's contemporary social problems. And this was not revolution as metaphor. This was revolution as Malcolm depicted it: bloody and violent.

Five days after the rioting ended in Newark, Detroit exploded, even more violently. The riot raged for an entire week and ended only after officials had called in nearly 10,000 National Guardsmen and 2700 U.S. Army paratroopers.[61] And while Detroit and Newark were the largest and most costly riots, major disturbances involving numerous arsons and allegations of sniper activity as well as rock, bottle and molotov cocktail throwing occurred in dozens of U.S. cities.[62]

It was in this context then, that SDS began to reevaluate its role in the struggle for social change. In early August SDS's National Interim Committee (NIC) met and debated the question of how SDS was to relate to the uprisings. One NIC member urged that "SDS should work to organize students into unions where they could then initiate revolution on the campus and take off from there." SDS's print shop collective, on the other hand, argued that "SDS's main course of action should be to get students off the campus and into the ghettos, black and white, and to lead students into actively preparing people for revolution." Explained one of the collective members: the "USA's great slave population"—black people—had recognized that they never would become real citizens of the nation. Consequently, "they must now set out on the lonely course left to them—armed struggle." But a variety of peoples—poor whites included—had a stake in this. "When and if these groups ever united with the black revolutionaries, who are now slowly forming to ignite fires of change in

this great land of slavery, then we will witness the second American Revolution."[63]

In Chicago, JOIN organizers Mike James and Bob Lawson announced that their job was "to try to explain black rebellions, not as race riots, but as class wars." They hoped that by so doing they could channel poor white frustration against "the real oppressors" rather than against the "niggers." While James and Lawson could not guarantee the success of their mission, nevertheless, they complained, JOIN was one of the few projects nationally that was even attempting to build poor white constituencies "that can relate and be related to, by blacks." It appeared to James and Lawson, moreover, that the situation was urgent. Those white radicals who, for whatever reason, felt that they could not be organizing poor whites should "begin to build guerrilla forces (white black panther parties for self-defense). Whites must begin to move, to act now so that black people will not be isolated and crushed, and so a radical movement can begin to develop in America."[64]

Thus, some SDS members and leaders responded to the summer's upsurge of black social motion with ever more dramatic readings of the situation. The United States, it seemed to them, teetered on the edge of a revolution. For the first time a variety of SDS members began suggesting that white radicals take up arms against the state.

New leftists also produced somewhat less dramatic, but seemingly no less radical re-assessments of the contemporary social struggle. Over 1967's labor day weekend 2000 white liberals, new leftists and black activists met in convention in Chicago under the auspices of a left-liberal-led National Conference for a New Politics (NCNP). Coming at the end of the summer's drama the combination of different social and racial groups could not help but produce a volatile weekend in which the relationship between white and black would take center stage and in which activists would contest the meaning and content of social change in the United States.

Left-liberals had initiated the NCNP in the hopes of drawing together the main social movements of the day—the anti-war, civil rights and black power movements. Certainly, the unification of social movements would have benefited the overall struggle for social change in the United States. But unification of social movements is not a simple process of addition. Black activists felt that historically white social movements—the populists and the labor movement most clearly—used blacks as bodies in battles that lower class whites fought against white elites. As soon as

these white-led movements won some form of accommodation with the elites, however, they forgot their black allies. Now, in the wake of what one black activist would term "the high-tide of black resistance," black activists were in no mood to set themselves up for another fall. If there were to be unity of the black and anti-war movements, it would come on black terms, or it would not come at all. Consequently, black delegates to the NCNP came together and issued 13 demands to the convention, including the demand that the convention cede to blacks, who constituted one-sixth of those in attendance, fifty percent of the votes. Said SNCC's James Forman to the assembled delegates:

> There can be no new concept of politics, no new coalitions, unless those of us who are the most dispossessed assume leadership and give direction to that new form of politics. If this does not happen, we are going to see the same old liberal-labor treachery of very rich white folks and Democratic- party-oriented whites and Negroes trying to determine what they can do for us.[65]

Another of the black demands called for the immediate creation of "white civilizing committees ... in all white communities to civilize and humanize the savage and beast like character that runs rampant throughout America." Black radicals once again were insisting that white radicals take responsibility for the racism in white communities. When finally the convention narrowly acceded to the black caucus demands, one of the NCNP's leaders bitterly—and without any sense of irony—complained that white delegates had "castrated" themselves in order to placate the black radicals. Notwithstanding this, leading new leftists Rennie Davis and Staughton Lynd concluded that "We believe black people must lead an American radical movement."[66]

Thus, even white radicals who were not calling for the picking up of guns, acknowledged the centrality and leading role of black social motion for radical social change in the United States. But what, concretely, did black leadership of "an American radical movement" mean to people like Lynd, Davis and other leading new leftists? Even the massive social motion of the summer of 1967 only seems to have challenged white activists to a limited degree. A year earlier Lynd had interpreted black power to mean that while organizing black communities would be the prerogative of black organizers, white organizers would be free to determine their own course of action. Given that perspective, Lynd and a substantial portion of leading new leftists focused their energies more

sharply on anti-draft work following the black movement's turn to black power. Moreover, SDS, with only a brief hesitation, maintained its belief that it, SDS, would lead a coalition of forces to radical social change in the nation. Even in the wake of the most intense summer of racial upheaval in the nation's history, Lynd and other new left leaders would maintain that same vision of coalition between white and black radicals, albeit in modified form. White radicals would continue to take responsibility for anti-war leadership, anti-draft leadership, organizing on campuses and organizing poor whites, and blacks would continue their work in black communities. Two differences, however, marked the immediate post-summer period. First, white radicals would grant at least the nominal title of leadership to the black movement. However qualified and hedged-in this grant of leadership was, it still represented some acknowledgement of the vast power of black social motion. In so doing, it also ultimately challenged white radicals' self-conceptions. And second, if white radicals did not in reality take up weapons in defense of the black community, following the summer's massive display of black militancy white radicals began to mimic the black movement's militancy and its rhetoric.

The new left thus entered the fall of 1967 intent on escalating the movement's militancy and taking the movement "from protest to resistance," in the words of a popular internal slogan of the day. On campuses and in demonstrations white radicals sought to block, attack or destroy symbols of the nation's war effort: draft boards, armed forces recruiters, recruiters for corporate munitions makers, induction centers, the Pentagon. In the San Francisco Bay area, for example, debates rent the anti-war movement as it planned a week of anti-draft activities, "Stop the Draft Week." A leader of the Resistance, an anti-draft group, characterized the discussions as splitting "between the traditional pacifists who envisioned the usual kind of sit-in ... and radicals, mainly SDS people, vicariously intoxicated by the summer riots, who spoke at first clearly, but with increasing vagueness of violent confrontation with the power structure."[67] Frank Bardacke, a leader of the radicals and subsequently indicted for the draft week activities, recalled that "Our idea was highly influenced by the Black Power people."[68] Ultimately, the radicals seized the initiative and on the final day of the action 10,000 demonstrators marched on the Oakland induction center, outnumbering and confronting the police, creating chaos in the city and giving white radicals a taste of the urban rebellions they modeled their behavior on.

One SDS participant described the action:

> Trash cans and newspaper racks were pulled into the streets. Writing appeared on walls, on sidewalks: 'Free Oakland,' 'Che Lives,' 'Resist,' 'Shut It Down.' Soon, unlocked cars were pushed into the intersections, along with large potted trees and movable [sic] benches. The sanctity of private property, which had held white students back from this kind of defensive action before, gave way to a new evaluation.

Police lines moved towards the crowds to disperse them and the radicals obliged by simply, "instinctively," getting onto the sidewalks and then converging on the streets again, *behind* the police lines. Thus, demonstrators again and again surrounded outnumbered police, demoralizing them and making them ineffective. Word of the tactic spread rapidly among the demonstrators "who were beginning to feel and even act somewhat like urban guerrillas."

> For the first time demonstrators, unarmed, saw police lines retreat in front of them. It was our first taste of real victory. ... we had taken and held downtown Oakland ... we had seen the cops back away from us.... Not only the sanctity of property, and the sanctity (invulnerability) of cops had been destroyed that day; we had established new goals, new criterion [sic] for success in what were clearly the early battles of a long, long war.[69]

Summarized Bardacke: "We finally had ourselves a white riot."[70]

On the following day, October 21, 1967, and on the other side of the continent, new leftists again broke from traditional models of protest at the Pentagon. Radicals at the Pentagon demonstration, like their counterparts in Oakland, wanted and did take the demonstration beyond the liberal "witness" politics that had dominated the movement in the past. Between five and ten thousand demonstrators, led by SDS people and Yippies, and "unwilling to commit a humiliating form" of *civil* disobedience, broke through lines of baton- and tear gas wielding-troops, knocked down cyclone fencing and camped themselves for the night in uneasy, but victorious ranks on the Pentagon's lawn.[71]

On the campuses as well, anti-war, anti-ROTC, anti-draft and anti-recruiting actions took on a far more militant tone. At the University of Wisconsin, Madison demonstrators battled police after the latter brutally arrested students seeking to block access to Dow Chemical

Company recruiters. After absorbing police charges and numerous volleys of tear gas lobbed at them, students finally fought back with rocks, bricks and whatever else they could throw. A flying brick broke a policeman's nose and knocked him out. Students broke another cop's leg by heaving a large rock at him. The hapless policeman fell to the ground and students "set upon him and beat him with hands and fists."[72] Madison activist Paul Buhle would later liken the action to the Watts riot.[73] At Brooklyn College 1000 students battled police in a demonstration to oust Navy recruiters.[74] Similar battles against war-recruiting raged at the University of Illinois and at Oberlin and Columbia SDSers led street battles at a New York City visit by Secretary of State Dean Rusk.[75]

SDS's inter-organizational secretary, Carl Davidson, summarized all these changes in the temperament and militancy of the movement. "The recent confrontations on our campuses between radical students and recruiters from the military and the war industries demonstrate the beginnings of a new phase of struggle within the anti-war movement." The level of student resistance, Davidson claimed, was "almost without precedent in the history of the American university." Whereas in the spring anti-recruiting sit-ins had occurred on college campuses as acts of "moral witness" against the war, the fall's actions had taken on the quality of "Tactical Political Resistance." Davidson saw four main reasons for this transformation: the continuing war against the Vietnamese; increasing government repression; a more sophisticated analysis of the university's role as part of and servant to American imperial society; and finally:

> the black ghetto rebellions this summer fundamentally altered the political reality of white America, including the white left. The black liberation movement has replaced the civil rights and anti-poverty movements, revealing the utter bankruptcy of corporate liberalisms [sic] cooptive programs. The events of this summer marked not only the possibility, but the beginning of the second American revolution.[76]

Thus, in the fall of 1967 white new leftists succeeded in breaking through their own "hang-ups" about the sanctity of property and the necessity for non-violence. Destroying property and fighting cops were no longer taboo as it had been in the past. While other factors undoubtedly played into this change in movement sensibilities, black social motion in the summer of 1967 had set the example and tone of militancy that white new leftists followed: it had been black people in the streets who had

legitimized rock and bottle throwing tactics, who had first destroyed property and who had fought the police. Davidson, and other new leftists implicitly, and in some cases explicitly, acknowledged this. For the most part, however, such acknowledgements were of limited value to the black movement. From SNCC activists to the black caucus at the NCNP, the black movement had demanded that white radicals organize against racism in the white community. SDS had largely ignored this demand and maintained a vision of white radicals organizing on whatever terms they themselves deemed relevant. Thus, the new left's new militancy stood in the same relation to black social motion as rock and roll did to rhythm and blues, or white jazz to black jazz: it was an appropriation—a "rip-off"—and not a serious self-conscious attempt at acknowledging the white radicals' relationship to the black movement. Its imitation of black assertiveness acknowledged the strength of the black movement, but in a fashion designed not to enhance that strength, but to use that power for its own immediate ends.

Thus, the overwhelming majority of SDS's chapter activity in the period from the fall of 1967 to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. consisted of anti-draft, anti-war and anti-recruiting work.[77]

In comparison, only a handful of SDS chapters conducted any concerted activities or campaigns around issues of university racism. Even when state troopers in Orangeburg, South Carolina murdered three black students and wounded at least 16 others in a struggle initiated by the students to desegregate a bowling alley, only one SDS chapter seems to have mobilized to protest the massacre.[78]

The Repression, Martin Luther King's Assassination, the Panthers, and Black Student Struggles: "Revolution has come..."

As much as most SDS members and leaders sought to avoid deeply analyzing and coming to terms with their relationship to the black struggle, events conspired against them. Above all, escalating repression against the black movement, Martin Luther King's assassination, the emergence of the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, and militant black student demonstrations forced SDS to assess and re-assess its understanding of and relationship to the black social movement.

On August 25, 1967, with the fires of Detroit and Newark still

smoldering, J. Edgar Hoover initiated the FBI Counterintelligence Program—COINTELPRO—against the organized black movement. COINTELPRO's object, as Hoover himself articulated it, was to "disrupt, misdirect, discredit or otherwise neutralize" the black movement, set black nationalist groups against each other, and alienate white support for the struggle. Hoover also found it particularly important that the FBI prevent the rise of a "black messiah." In practical terms, the FBI orchestrated a harassment, arrest and murder campaign against SNCC and against what was then a local Oakland-based black group, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense, as well as other local black nationalist organizations.[79]

In consequence, police busted SNCC chapters and leaders all the over the country. Between July 1967 and February 1968, for example, various police agencies arrested SNCC's leader, Rap Brown, no less than six times on a variety of charges, and imposed over $250,000 in bail bonds on Brown.[80] In October 1967 in Oakland, a police campaign of harassment against Black Panther founder and Minister of Defense Huey P. Newton culminated in a shoot-out that left one police officer dead and Huey Newton seriously wounded and under arrest. By early March 1968 SDS leaders were beginning to realize that the repression signaled something significant to the black movement. Just as importantly, the COINTELPRO campaign also forced SDS to reassess its sense of self and its sensibilities about race in order to build the kind of understandings of race that would allow it to respond forcefully to the repression. Thus, slowly, SDS came to realize that it needed to be acting against the attacks on the black movement.

In an unsigned front page article, "Attack on Militants—The Man Moves Hard: Where are We?" SDS offered a self-critical look at its lack of effort in countering the growing repression against the black struggle. "There is a new and qualitative change in Federal court actions," the article reported. "It is clear that the Man has decided to jail militant black leaders before next summer." The article continued by reeling off the various dates and places that Rap Brown had been busted and concluded by asking: "Will our silence insure that Rap and the black people of this country are imprisoned and killed?" Or, on the contrary, would white leftists make it clear through word and deed that "we are supporting our black brothers in every way possible."[81]

Perhaps it was in the context of this growing repression and the self-critical attitude that it engendered that *New Left Notes* two weeks later published "Learn the Lessons of U.S. History," by Noel Ignatin. In

two closely-argued pages "Learn the Lessons..." decisively challenged the dominant SDS vision of the significance of the black struggle, of white-black relations, white ERAP-type organizing, and, implicitly, of white identity.

Ignatin began his article by characterizing the ERAP, old Left and PL style of organizing whites:

> find the issues which immediately affect the people we are trying to reach, and which they feel most keenly. Organize around these issues and, as the people are drawn more into struggle in their own interest, they will come to see, with our help, who are their friends and enemies. Specifically, coalitions between poor white and black will develop from each fighting for his own 'self-interest,' and coming to see that there is a common enemy, the rich white man.

But, argued Ignatin, white supremacist thinking, and the material privilege on which it rested, would not allow such an approach to work. According to Ignatin, the nation's elite had made a deal with white workers: if the workers would support the rulers in their "enslavement of the non-white-majority of the earth's population," then the elite would reward them with "a monopoly of skilled jobs, education, and health facilities superior to those of non-whites." Moreover, white workers would occasionally be allowed to enter the ranks of the elite and they would be accorded "social privileges and a whole series of privileges befitting" their white skin. Ignatin then succinctly summarized his viewpoint: "White supremacy is a deal between the exploiters and the exploited, at the expense of the rest of the exploited." Thus, "self-interest" coalitions were bound to fail "if the self-interest of the whites means the maintainance [sic] of white supremacy and the white-skin privilege."

All the nation's great labor struggles, Ignatin continued, had foundered on the shoals of racial privilege. Du Bois had so argued concerning the labor struggles of the Reconstruction period; C. Vann Woodward had shown that during the populist era whites had shown the same propensity to opt for white supremacy over class solidarity. And, added Ignatin, in the 1940s the CIO had halted its organizing effort in the South, opting for accommodation with New Deal liberals rather than taking up the task of jointly organizing white and black Southern workers.

Ignatin's analysis was not entirely new. W.E.B. Du Bois, whom Ignatin credited in "Learn the Lessons ..." had said much the same thing

in *Black Reconstruction*. And Carmichael's black power analysis implicitly had said as much. But what was new about Ignatin's argument was that it was coming from *within* the white new left and combating the traditional white left formulations that had managed to overlook white privilege. Real solidarity with black people, Ignatin was saying, would require something more of whites than simply lining up against the rich.

> Solidarity between black and white requires more from the white than a willingness to 'help the Negroes up if it doesn't lower us any.' It requires a willingness to renounce our privileges, precisely to 'lower ourselves' in order that we can all rise up together. If anyone says that it will be difficult to get the whites to renounce their privileges, I readily concede the difficulty—whoever said it would be easy to make a revolution? But is [sic] anyone thinks it is possible to skip this renunciation and to build coalitions between blacks and whites who want to maintain their privileges, I will point to 1877, 1904 and 1940, and say that if this task is not tackled and achieved, we will see the same thing over again.[82]

In the face of the overwhelming majority of new leftists who had seized upon black power as a means of taking up struggles against the war as legitimate "white" struggles and who had consigned struggles against racism to an ancillary position in the struggle for social change; and of the smaller number of new leftists who had taken up organizing the white poor but also made race and racism something external to that process, Ignatin threw down the challenge: if the white left failed to confront white supremacy, failed to confront white privilege, then it could not contribute to significant social change in the country.

Ignatin's "Learn the Lessons ..." appeared in the *New Left Notes* that SDS had prepared to coincide with its March 1968 Lexington, Kentucky National Council meeting. At Lexington, SDS passed a far more significant and thoughtful resolution on race than the one it had passed over a year-and-a-half earlier after SNCC's black power turn. While the resolution began by expressing concern over the prospects of government suppression of the black movement as yet another summer of unrest began, the real strength of the resolution lay with its analysis of racism. Racist culture, the resolution argued, was not only black people's enemy, but white people's enemy too. Racism was a ruling class ideology that encouraged people to identify with their rulers and that maintained a

system that stood against their interest as human beings. Moreover, nearly two years after SNCC's turn to Black Power, SDS finally declared that:

> we have a special responsibility to fight racism among our own white population. In the context of that struggle against racism in the white population, we will be able to aid the struggle for black survival and for black liberation in every way we can.
>
> Finally, we recognize that racism insinuates itself into both our personal and our political attitudes. We are determined to fight it in our personal lives as we fight all the aspects of a racist culture that the system attempts to inject into us. We must also be clear in our political attitudes.[83]

SDS at last publicly committed itself to organizing whites against racism and recognized in collective form that racism shaped and distorted SDS's vision. Thus, SDS members took their first real step towards recognizing their own racialization as whites in America. Repression against the black movement thus generated a sense of urgency for some new leftists, a sense that pushed them towards genuinely new and radical understandings of race and of the self-identity of white people. This would become all the more apparent with the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Black reaction to King's assassination was massive and instantaneous. Major disturbances broke out in over 100 cities and 75,000 National Guardsmen were called out to suppress the riots. In the days that followed 39 people died, 2,500 suffered injuries, and rioters destroyed untold amounts of property. In Washington, DC, as 70 fires raged simultaneously throughout the city and a pall of smoke hung over the city, troops surrounded the White House and Capitol. Black youth looted and destroyed within two blocks of the White House.[84]

Tens of thousands of white and black students responded to the assassination in SDS- and coalitions of SDS- and black student organization-led actions all over the country. In Boston, for example, twenty thousand students rallied on the Boston Commons in a memorial for King. On the following day 13,000 students demonstrated in front of Boston's city hall demanding that the police and the National Guard "be kept out of the ghetto"; teams of white students leafletted campuses and white neighborhoods in support of the demand. And in Austin, Texas, 1300 students rallied in memory of Dr. King and then marched on the state house, entered it en masse and continued their demonstration inside

the Capitol building. Similar actions occurred on campuses across the nation.[85]

If the ghetto rebellion in Washington, DC crowned the black response to Martin Luther King's assassination, then the struggle at Columbia University represented the height of the student protest that followed King's death. Two days after the assassination SDS leader Mark Rudd shocked the respectable Columbia community when he disrupted a university-sponsored memorial for Dr. King. Rudd stood up in the middle of a speech by liberal Columbia vice-president David Truman and denounced the hypocrisy of an administration that would eulogize King while paying its predominantly black custodial staff a pittance, displacing black tenants in university-owned real estate, and encroaching ever more aggressively on surrounding black neighborhoods.[86]

Prior to King's assassination, of course, SDS had been active on campus. For several years intellectuals had led the SDS chapter and had pursued an educational strategy on campus, leading campaigns against NROTC, the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA), and against military recruiting. Only with the "pie incident" did a more activist segment of the chapter come to leadership. But it took King's assassination, the action of Columbia's Student Afro-American Society (SAS), and the actions and threats of Harlem's black community to create the conditions that would result in the Columbia rebellion. Rudd, writing less than a year after the rebellion, claimed that the first "push to whites" at Columbia came from King's assassination, "which spurred SDS on to greater militancy." The second push came from Columbia's black students. SAS, according to Rudd, had been "mostly a cultural or social organization ... [O]nly with the death of Martin Luther King" did it begin "to make political demands." Most important, SAS lined itself up with the demands of Harlem activists who had campaigned against Columbia's plans to build a university gym facility in Harlem's Morningside Park—community members were to have been given access to the facility via a rear door.

On April 23, less than three weeks after King's death, a joint SDS-SAS rally and demonstration escalated into a Columbia building occupation after demonstrators had ripped down fences enclosing the gym construction site. While the building occupation began as a joint SDS-SAS occupation, before the first evening was out, black students had asked the white students to leave. Rudd acknowledged that SAS based its decision, at least in part, on SAS's evaluation of SDS's lack of militancy and determination. Nevertheless, SAS's resolve deeply affected SDSers

who proceeded to seize and occupy five more buildings over the next several days. Rudd would later admit the centrality of the black students—and Harlem—for the rebellion. SDS's occupation, Rudd confessed,

> itself hinged on that of the blacks, and the overwhelming presence of the black students and Harlem itself in proximity forced us to keep the image of the real world—away from which middle-class white students can so easily slip—clear and bright in our own minds. Because of the blacks, we recognized the immediacy and necessity of the struggle: Vietnam is far away, unfortunately, for most people, and our pain has become diffuse and dull.[87]

Thus King's assassination and the anger that the assassination evoked in both white and black students and especially in black inner cities across the nation, spurred the new left's militancy and raised fundamental questions about the ideology of whiteness. Black people were making history and setting the terms for struggle in the United States; whites were only tentatively following. This was not the way young whites had been taught that the world worked.

Two days after King's assassination, on the same day that Mark Rudd disrupted David Truman's memorial speech for King, Oakland California police killed eighteen-year-old Black Panther leader "L'il" Bobby Hutton and seriously wounded BP Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver. The Panthers' powerful vision of social change coupled with the intensifying government repression against them would constitute the final push in SDS's quest for self-definition.

This attack on Bobby Hutton and Cleaver was the most extreme action to date against the Panthers. At the time of the attack *New Left Notes* was able to report that over the previous eight months "pictures and descriptions of Panther leaders" had been "widely distributed to police." In January, San Francisco police had broken down Cleaver's door without a warrant and searched his apartment. In February Oakland police had done the same thing at Panther chairman Bobby Seale's apartment and arrested Seale and his wife. In late March, also without a warrant, San Diego police broke into and searched the home of the Party's local organizer. Police had continually harassed Panther vehicles over an extended period of time. In Oakland itself, Oakland police had killed five unarmed black youth under eighteen years of age in the single month of March. In addition, *NLN* reported, the mass media had been carrying out

"a campaign of slander" against the Panthers. "This systematic political persecution of the Black Panther Party MUST BE RESISTED," insisted *NLN*.[88]

Merritt Community College students Huey Newton and Bobby Seale founded the Panthers in Oakland in 1966. The group first drew national attention with their patrolling of the black community to deter police harassment. Openly carrying shotguns, then legal under California law, teams of Panthers would follow police patrols through Oakland's black community. When the police stopped a black person, the Panthers would jump out, observe the police and provide legal advice to the person being harassed. Oftentimes better versed in California law than the police, the Panthers frustrated the cops, both through their command of the law and through their refusal to be intimidated. In October 1967 the Panther profile rose still higher when Huey was wounded and jailed in a shootout that left an Oakland cop dead. Subsequently, when California's legislature sought to close up the loophole in its laws that allowed the open carrying of weapons, a squad of Panthers descended on the Capitol, arms in hand. Surrounded by press as they strode onto the Capitol grounds, the Panthers in the bustle and confusion accidentally entered a wrong door that opened directly into the Assembly chambers.[89] Police arrested the Panthers but their national profile rose even higher. Later the paroled convict and celebrated radical journalist Eldridge Cleaver joined their ranks and added to the group's growing visibility. Soon young blacks in cities across the country were founding Panther chapters.[90]

As a journalist for the slick left-liberal magazine, *Ramparts*, and as the author of a best-selling collection of essays, *Soul on Ice*, Cleaver drew a powerful portrait of the Panthers for young new leftists. In a famous piece published in *Ramparts* following his April 1968 bust, Cleaver described his first meeting with the Panthers. The Panthers had taken responsibility for security for Betty Shabazz, Malcolm X's widow, in her visit to San Francisco. Twenty armed Panthers escorted Shabazz to the *Rampart's* office for an interview with Cleaver. The sight of the armed black men, all with black leather jackets, black berets and light-colored turtleneck shirts halted traffic and brought a contingent of San Francisco's finest to the scene. Cleaver described for his *Rampart's* readers the ensuing confrontation as one of the cops, "a big, beefy" fellow, stepped forward and challenged the Panthers.

This was the most tense of moments. Huey stopped in his tracks

> and stared at the cop. ...
>
> Huey walked to within a few feet of the cop and said, 'What's the matter, you got an itchy finger?'
>
> The cop made no reply.
>
> 'You want to draw your gun?' Huey asked him.
>
> The other cops were calling out for this cop to cool it ... but he didn't seem to be able to hear them. He was staring into Huey's eyes, measuring him.
>
> 'O.K.,' Huey said. 'You big fat racist pig, draw your gun!'
>
> The cop made no move.
>
> 'Draw it, you cowardly dog!' Huey pumped a round into the chamber of the shotgun. 'I'm waiting,' he said, and stood there waiting for the cop to draw. ...
>
> I was thinking, staring at Huey surrounded by all those cops and daring one of them to draw, 'Goddam, that nigger is c-r-a-z-y!'
>
> Then the cop facing Huey gave it up. He heaved a heavy sigh and lowered his head. Huey literally laughed in his face and then went off up the street at a jaunty pace, disappearing in a blaze of dazzling sunlight.[91]

This was heady stuff for white (and especially male) new leftists frustrated with their inability to stop a system they deemed unjust. Thus, the Panthers' mystique, their rapid growth throughout the country, and the government's mounting repression against them all drew the new left's admiration, support and, increasingly, emulation.

Particularly under Newton's and Cleaver's leadership the Panthers developed a sophisticated analysis of American society. Malcolm, Marx, Mao, Fanon and, especially, the actual experience of blacks in the United States, shaped the Panther theory and program. As with SNCC, the Panthers saw blacks in America as an internal colony and self-consciously aligned themselves with the world anti-colonial revolution. And, like SNCC, the Panthers formed themselves as an all black organization, from which they barred whites. Unlike SNCC, however, the Panthers were Marxists, with a class analysis of black society and of American society that blended Marx and Malcolm. Finally, because the Panthers began as a black nationalist organization, they did not share the same concern with white domination manifest by SNCC, which had to fight its way to black nationalism.[92]

On a general level the Panthers did not demand the same thing from white radicals as SNCC had demanded, i.e., the Panthers did not explicitly urge white radicals to organize white communities against racism—at least not prior to the summer of 1969. On the contrary, they presented a vision more in accord with the the actual practice that new leftists had developed since SNCC's black power turn. In *Soul on Ice,* for example, Eldridge wrote that "a generation of white youth" existed in America that was "truly worthy of a black man's respect." And, in a widely reprinted and circulated prison interview that Huey gave in the summer of 1968, he demanded two things of white radicals: that they give complete support to the Panther program and that they take on the added function of attacking the police in the white community when black radicals were attacked in the black community. Explained Huey:

> when something happens in the black colony—when we're attacked and ambushed in the black colony—then the white revolutionary students and intellectuals and all the other whites who support the colony should respond by defending us, by attacking the enemy in their community. Every time that we're attacked in our community there should be a reaction by the white revolutionaries, they should respond by defending us, by attacking part of the security force.

This was a different vision of white responsibility than the one SNCC had put forward. It gave white radicals considerably more latitude than SNCC had given them. While the Panthers demanded that white radicals support them in their work in the black community, what white radicals did in the white community was their own business.[93]

But if it was less demanding of white radicals in its general attitude towards them, in its specific programs the Panthers sought more concrete things than did SNCC. Thus, in their first contact with SDS the Panthers sought a national alliance around the 1968 presidential campaign. The Panthers had already concluded an alliance with left-liberals in California in the Peace and Freedom Party. Peace and Freedom had endorsed the entire Panther program—the precondition for the Panthers' cooperation—and had made Cleaver the party's presidential candidate. Peace and Freedom's white leftists believed that if there were to be a unified program for social change in the United States that program had to have the approval of the black community and its militant representatives. Possibly out of a desire to push Peace and Freedom further to the left, Cleaver

sought out the largest and most radical white group in the nation for help. Specifically, Cleaver sought to make one of the most articulate and intelligent of SDS's leaders, Carl Oglesby, his vice presidential candidate.[94] Oglesby refused to make the decision on his own and referred the Panthers to SDS's national leadership body. Thus, in early July 1968 Cleaver sat down with SDS NIC members to discuss the prospects of Oglesby's candidacy. And, in this first formal discussion, SDS rejected the Panther leadership. The rejection itself took a characteristic form and foreshadowed the development of a significant tendency in SDS.

Newly elected SDS interorganizational secretary Bernardine Dohrn publicly reported SDS's decision to the membership two weeks after the meeting. Dohrn opened her report with a quotation from Huey's prison interview: white radicals had to chose their friends and their enemies, and, having made that decision, put it into practice "by attacking the protectors of the institutions", i.e., the police. She then acknowledged that the Panthers' "existance [sic] and growth ... has posed the question of black/white revolutionary movements in clear, immediate, and real form." For those still not familiar with the Panthers, she quickly sketched a favorable summary of their politics. They self-consciously saw themselves as organizing the "field niggers;" they were inveterate opponents of both black capitalism and non-revolutionary cultural nationalism; they were anti-capitalist; they were willing to ally with white radicals in pursuit of "tactical necessities"; and they were seeking to use Cleaver's Peace and Freedom candidacy as a means of promoting Panther "politics and organization." Nevertheless, she declared, SDS rejected Cleaver's proposal for Oglesby's candidacy, insisting that while SDS respected the Panthers' alliance with Peace and Freedom, "alliances made by us must be evaluated on our own terms."

The white and the black movement, Dohrn explained, had "different levels of consciousness" and these different levels dictated different strategies. Oglesby's candidacy would commit SDS to an alliance not only with the Panthers, but with the white left-liberals in Peace and Freedom and would involve the "vehicle of electoral politics." And, she continued, since SDS had numerous differences with Peace and Freedom, Oglesby's candidacy ran the risk of misrepresenting SDS. Thus, SDS leaders rejected the alliance because of Peace and Freedom's association and because SDS leaders felt that electoral politics were inappropriate for the level of consciousness in SDS's white constituency.

How then would SDS continue to develop a relation with the

Panthers? Dohrn argued that SDS was seeking to "to develop not exclusive or opportunistic alliances, but solid political relationships based on common experiences and goals." SDS sought to build alliances "not on least common denominator politics" but on clear recognition of differences as well as similarities. Thus, said Dohrn, SDS felt that there were stronger means available for promoting a Panther-SDS alliance than the means that Cleaver had proposed. These means included SDS's nationally promoting the Panthers in SDS chapters; joint speaking tours by Panther and SDS leaders; and "the development of Defense and Self-Defense organizations." In any case, Dohrn recognized the Panthers' growing influence nationally, and suggested that SDS needed to be in close communication with the Panthers linking up with their programs and issues "when—and as long as—our political perspectives are similar."

Dohrn closed her report in a telling fashion. SDS would reject the Panthers' concrete leadership but do so by being more revolutionary than the Panthers. Said Dohrn:

> The main point is: the best thing that we can be doing for ourselves, as well as for the Panthers and the revolutionary black liberation struggle, is to build a fucking white revolutionary mass movement, not a national paper alliance. Building a white Left movement from the ground up means we need the Panthers and black radicals there—at the ground level.

As Cleaver understood, there was no necessary contradiction between SDS's "building a fucking white revolutionary mass movement" and Cleaver's presidential campaign. On the contrary, the value of the campaign lay in its ability to reach out to millions of people with a radical program and analysis of American society, something the left in the U.S. had not been able to undertake seriously since Eugene Debs's campaigns in the early twentieth century. Radicals waged such campaigns not to win elections, but primarily as a means of reaching out to and organizing new people. Apparently, this was not militant enough for SDS. Moreover, by starting her report with a quote from the jailed Huey, Dohrn threw back the Panthers' militance at them. Huey had said attack the police. Doing that was far more in keeping with the SDS leaders' developing self-image than was working on an election campaign. We will cooperate with you, she said, but on the level that we chose, on a level of militance that is really revolutionary. This would not be the last time that SDS would reject the Panthers' leadership using the same, "more revolutionary than thou"

posturing.

In *Soul on Ice* Cleaver had developed an interesting psychological characterization of black and white: from the times of slavery it had been necessary for the slaveowner to characterize the slave as mindless, as all brawn and no brains—the "supermasculine menial" in Cleaver's words. On the other hand, the slaveowner, who did no physical work, had to characterize himself as having an intellect that suited him to the job of running the plantation and running the lives of those on it—the "omnipotent administrator." According to Cleaver, those same basic psychological traits held into the present. On a psychological level, these roles defined what was revolutionary for black and for white. For blacks, the task was to recover the mind. And, argued Cleaver, the Panthers embodied that recovery. Black people would lead their own liberation. On the other hand, whites had to recover their bodies and, by implication, respect black people's minds.[96] In choosing the Panthers' militancy over their electoral strategy, SDS chose the black body over the black mind or, what was the same thing, they chose the white mind over the black mind. It was what the left in the U.S. had always done.

Two, Three, Many SDSs: Progressive Labor

A number of factors went into SDS's ability to resist Panther leadership. In the first place, the Panthers were only two years old and had started as a local organization. While Panther chapters sprang up in numerous cities across the country, the level of consciousness and the practical activities taken on by the different groups varied greatly. This unevenness in the Panthers' development inhibited their ability to give direction to the new left. Secondly, from the start, police subjected the Panthers to a campaign of harassment, arrest, and murder. This weakened their ability to direct the new left to a still greater degree. The Panthers not only had to defend themselves, but they needed the new left's help in the process. Various stripes of new leftists, liberals and old leftists could manipulate this need to avoid accountability to the Panther leadership. Finally, and perhaps of greatest importance, SDS itself was growing rapidly. Between April 1968 and November 1968 SDS had more than doubled its numbers, from 35,000 to over 80,000 members. As with the Panthers, this vast increase in numbers brought with it a tremendous unevenness in SDS's political development. More significantly, however, SDS leaders came to see this huge membership—the largest left organization in the nation since the 1930s—as a base for its own power

and ego gratification. How easy it was to see SDS's growth as the product of its leaders' wisdom; how easy was it to forget the tremendous black social motion that had called SDS itself into being and had precipitated its growth again and again; how tempting was it for the leaders to see themselves as the new Lenins, leading an army of revolutionaries into battle.

Progressive Labor Party with its cadre of dedicated "Marxist-Leninists" needed few incentives for its pretensions to leadership over the new left. Having rejected the Communist Party USA's "revisionist" leadership, by definition PL conceived of itself as the revolution's vanguard. Originally the Party had formed a youth organization, the May 2nd Movement, from which it would recruit new members. But less than two years after M2M's formation, PL dissolved the group and chose to work within SDS. As one historian put it, PL was more certain of recruiting out of the extant mass organization SDS than it was out of a minuscule M2M.[97] And, as a vanguard organization, PL had a greater interest in SDS than simply recruiting. Above all, PL needed to give proper guidance to SDS. As SDS grew, guiding the organization became all the more important. Moreover, given the black social movement's power and the leadership that that movement created for itself, defining for SDS a "correct" understanding of race, i.e., an understanding that subordinated race to class in old left fashion, came to have a paramount significance. Indeed, a self-acting and self-defining black movement challenged PL's very identity.

At SDS's December 1968 Ann Arbor National Council meeting PL successfully put forward its resolution on race, "Fight Racism; Build a Worker-Student Alliance; Smash Imperialism." The proposal had particular weight because its authors were leaders of what was then the largest and longest running student struggle of the day, the San Francisco State college strike. In its resolution PL put forward its traditional old left understanding of race: race was subordinate to class. But the real heart of the resolution lay in PL's new discovery that all nationalism, including black nationalism, was reactionary. In a section titled "Defeat Nationalism" PL argued that:

> Nationalism has replaced pacifism as the main ideological weapon of the ruling class within the Black Liberation Movement. Nationalism is used to divert Third World people from struggle on a class basis and from making alliances with

> white workers and students. Because of the special super-exploitation of black people, their struggle is national in form and working class in content. Thus, at SF State there was a separate TWLF. Usually a nationalist feeling is the initial conscious impetus towards struggle among black people. But the material basis of this struggle is class oppression. Consciousness of this oppression must become the predominant ideology for these struggles to win.[98]

Thus PL staked out its position in the struggle for SDS leadership. On the basis of political line its main opponent was the Black Panther Party and the black nationalist movement that had risen with SNCC's call for Black Power. In PL's view the Panthers were not simply mistaken but actually represented the enemy within the revolutionary camp. By calling for Black Power they diverted black people from their real enemy—the capitalist ruling class—and pushed them away from alliances with their real allies, the white working class.

The fact that PL could secure passage for its "Fight Racism ..." proposal indicated its growing strength within the organization. As a disciplined cadre organization with seemingly new left credentials PL was particularly well-suited for influencing the freewheeling SDS. Despite the fact that PL had the loyalty of only a small fraction of the roughly 80,000 members of SDS nationally, it had the ability to mobilize its closest adherents and turn them out for SDS's national conferences. Thus, PL could secure a disproportionate influence nationally.

This influence threatened SDS in two ways. First, despite its hyper-revolutionary rhetoric, PL was a profoundly conservative organization. Its stance towards black nationalism, for example, gave a seemingly revolutionary cover to people who felt threatened by the black movement's militancy and rhetoric. Second, and more important, SDS's growth depended upon its ability to remain open to the developing struggles of the black movement. From SDS's inception, the black movement had consistently set the tone for SDS politics, strategy and tactics. SDS had certainly fought over the meaning of the black movement and often sought to define that movement's developments in ways that safely accorded with SDS's self-conceptions. But it had never so systematically discounted the movement as PL discounted it. Thus, if SDS adopted PL's stance toward the black movement, it would cut itself off from precisely the kind of social motion that had built SDS. Indeed,

condemning the black movement would have transformed SDS into a sect, i.e., into a group which maintained its analysis in opposition to the real social struggles of the day.

The Revolutionary Youth Movement and the Upsurge of Black Student Struggles

Given this growing threat, mainstream SDSers scrambled to develop a coherent vision that would both counter PL's growing strength and retain a relationship of openness to the black movement as it was really developing. These dual concerns motivated the development of "Revolutionary Youth Movement" (RYM) politics in SDS.

RYM came from three distinct areas of SDS activity: the Chicago national office (NO) and Chicago regional SDSers led by Dohrn, SDS national secretary Mike Klonsky, and Chicago SDSers "Slim" Coleman, Ignatin, and Howie Machtinger; the Jesse James Gang in the midwest region, centered around Billy Ayers, Jim Mellen and Terry Robbins; and the Columbia and New York regional SDS's action faction people centered around Mark Rudd, John Jacobs (JJ), and other Columbia leaders. In general, the Chicago people had the most theoretical bent, looking to re-shape Marxism in light of the upsurge of the black liberation movement. Coleman and Ignatin, in particular, were searching for a real understanding of the interrelation between racial and class dynamics in American society. Ignatin, who came out of an old left background and, at 28 years of age, was older than most of the SDSers, had gone farthest in re-casting Marxist theory to accord with America's racial realities.

In contrast, the James Gang arose in opposition to the theoretically inclined Ann Arbor SDS chapter leadership. Though Mellen had a history with the left that dated back at least as far as PL's M2M, and had a strong theoretical grounding, the James Gang were the most adamant actionists in the RYM coalition. Indeed, even their choice of name reflected their "in your face" proclivities. Ayers and Robbins, in particular, articulated their politics as an "action" politics opposed to "base-building" politics. Thus, the James Gang found PL's "base-building" strategy particularly irksome. Insisting as it did upon the centrality of the industrial proletariat, PL opposed any actions that might "alienate" its supposed constituency. Finally, Columbia's action faction seems to have stood somewhere between the Chicago people and the James Gang, on the whole leaning

towards the actionists.

The Chicago NO group offered the most consistent and thoughtful treatment of the black movement, exceptions notwithstanding. Thus, even in the work they did for the anti-war demonstrations at the Chicago Democratic National Convention, for example, they were sure to bring in the significance of the black movement. In a lengthy open letter Carl Oglesby prepared for the supporters of anti-war Democratic presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy, the former SDS president criticized liberal understandings of race and defended Black Power. If the recently released National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders had correctly diagnosed as white racism the problem facing black people, Oglesby argued, then why was it that the Commission offered answers that did not challenge white racism? More importantly, the Kerner commission missed the most significant point: white racism affected the black community because the black community was powerless. Consequently, black power was the real answer to white racism. But the problem with that for the liberal elite was the example, or threat, that a self-governing black community offered to white Americans. If blacks began to really run their own communities, "who could predict the fate of the system of centralized top-down control to which all of us are tied in all our institutions? The current ruling elite might not last too long and the social priorities they dictate to the nation might change in a genuinely democratic manner."[99]

The James Gang, on the other hand, gave the least attention to the black movement. Ayers had gotten involved in SDS only within the last year and had been inspired by the action he saw at the Democratic National Convention demonstrations in Chicago in the summer of 1968.[100] By the fall of 1968 he and Robbins were traveling the midwest SDS circuit, looking to reorient SDS politics in the direction of a far greater militancy. In language characteristic of the enthusiasm they brought to their task, Ayers and Robbins proclaimed that:

> There's a whole new set on campus. SDS is coming out of isolation; it's growing, maturing, developing—and not by watering down radical rhetoric, analysis, or practice; but by being and saying exactly who we are, and by offering to students real alternatives to the plastic jive-ass society the Man wants to put them in.

If Ayers and Robbins pulled on black language to sustain their argument, they in no way saw the integral power of the movement from

which that language sprang. On the contrary, the importance they ascribed to their mission left the *content* of militant politics aside. In Ayers and Robbins's assessment, the "base-builders" sorely underestimated the alienation that young people felt, and the consequent receptivity that those young people would have for militant politics. "Aggressive confrontation politics," the duo argued, would "begin to provide people" with options for life outside the confines of American society. Thus, the kinds of struggles that Ayers and Robbins were leading in midwest chapters centered on "the most important issue facing the Movement today: that of the use of confrontation and aggressive politics in building revolutionary consciousness." And what was the role of the black movement for the James Gang? "We're saying to people that youth is the revolution," Ayers and Robbins argued, "that politics is about life, struggle, survival ..."

> We're saying that there ain't no place to be today but in the Movement.... And we're saying to kids all over the place that if you're tired of the Vietnamese eating napalm for breakfast, if you're tired of the blacks eating gas for dinner, and YOU'RE tired of eating plastic for lunch, then give it a name: Call it SDS, and join us.[101]

Thus, James Gang politics operated at least in part off a paternalistic notion of the black struggle, to the extent that it mentioned that struggle at all. *Action* and *youth* was what was of moment for the James Gang.

By December 1968 as PL's challenge became more and more pronounced, the three RYM streams came together behind the first Revolutionary Youth Movement proposal. Submitted by SDS national secretary Mike Klonsky, the proposal offered the first systematic response to PL's challenge and, shortcomings notwithstanding, defended the black movement as it was actually developing. According to Klonsky, SDS was facing "its most crucial ideological decision, that of determining its direction with regards to the working class." Unlike PL, which subordinated everything to a narrowly defined class struggle, the RYM proposal offered a vision of class struggle that defined anti-imperialist struggles, including the struggle of black people in the U.S., as being the truest "expression of the working class at its most conscious level."

RYM was a transitional strategy. White working class youth, RYM argued, faced particularly sharp contradictions: they had not been socialized to the same extent as older workers; the government made youth fight in Vietnam; young workers did not yet have secure jobs, nor

did they have the kind of commitments to stability that older workers had. In short, white working class youth were more open to revolutionary politics than older workers. Consequently, RYM argued that the path to organizing the working class as a whole lay through organizing working class youth.

Moreover, Klonsky insisted that "Building a class-conscious youth movement means fighting racism. SDS must see this fight as a primary task." In fact, white racism—"white supremacy"—tied "white people to the state by splitting them from the most aggressive class struggle." Racism therefore was a "central contradiction in American society." In order to fight it, SDS had to recognize and ally with the struggle blacks were waging for liberation in America. That struggle, Klonsky continued, was both "an anti-colonial struggle against racism and the racist imperialist power structure" and a central part of the class struggle within the United States.[102]

At the December 1968 Ann Arbor national council meeting, PL's "Fight Racism ..." proposal and Klonsky's RYM proposal passed, both by narrow margins. Thus SDS was on record as attacking and supporting the black nationalist movement at one and the same time. Once again, however, the reality and the power of the black movement, and the attacks upon it, intruded upon SDS's debates, pushed SDS forward and unified the RYM tendency to a still greater extent.

Beginning at San Francisco State in November 1968 black students led a veritable wave of rebellions across the nation's campuses. On November 6, following San Francisco State's suspension of professor George Murray, who was also the Panthers' Minister of Education, the campus Black Student Union called for a strike. In addition to demanding Murray's reinstatement, the BSU demanded an autonomous black studies department and open admissions policies for black students from the city's high schools. SF State's Third World Liberation Front, composed of Asian and Latino students, quickly endorsed the demands, joined a coalition with the BSU and added demands for establishing third world studies programs.[103] (Ironically, PL dominated SF State's SDS chapter and several of the TWLF leaders were PL members. Initially, PL supported the strike and presented itself to SDS as leading the action of what would become the longest running, and one of the bloodiest campus confrontations of the decade. Indeed, PL gained credibility in SDS by virtue of its proximity to the SF State struggle. But politics ultimately outed PL. Following its December "Smash Racism ..." proposal victory,

PL reversed itself on the strike and denounced the strike demands as nationalist and therefore reactionary and racist.[104])

The media intensively covered the SF State struggle, particularly after the appointment to the school's presidency of hard-liner S.I. Hayakawa. Hayakawa repeatedly sanctioned police attacks on the struggle and images of cops with three-foot riot batons bloodying students flooded the media, spreading word of the struggle high and low. Black and other third world students rapidly followed SF State's example. Black students at state and community colleges in the Los Angeles area, for example, shut down their schools in January 1969: San Fernando Valley State College students won black and brown studies departments; Southwestern Junior College students and East Los Angeles College students shut their schools down over the same demands; between 4000 and 6000 students and community members demonstrated at Los Angeles Valley College demanding cops off their campus and expressing solidarity with the SFVSC demands. In small black colleges and community colleges across the nation the story was the same. Administrators closed Wiley College in Marshall, Texas "indefinitely" and had the Texas Rangers sweep and clear the campus in the wake of student struggles. At Mississippi Valley State College in Ita Bena administrators suspended 200 students in struggles over the same demands. At Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, 150 students occupied the administration building demanding the firing of racist teachers. Black and third world students at Swarthmore and Brandeis occupied campus facilities raising the same type of demands. Similar struggles occurred at Duke, CCNY, University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, Berkeley, Roosevelt University, UC Santa Barbara, Williams College, Brooklyn College, Eastern Michigan University at Ypsilanti, UNC at Chapel Hill, and the University of Houston. Black high school students mobilized against racist teaching practices and inferior facilities across the country: in LA, 10,000 black students took part in confrontations in support of their demands; in Orlando, Florida, 3,000 black students boycotted classes in support of their demands. And the list of actions continued.[105] These struggles culminated in the armed seizure of a building by black students at Cornell University.

To be sure, anti-war, anti-recruiting, anti-research demonstrations continued during this time on campuses across the nation. But in their militancy and in their breadth, the black and third world student struggles through the winter and spring of 1969 clearly set the terms. Even opponents of black nationalism were compelled to acknowledge this.

SDS's Southern California Regional Council, for example, admitted that SDS had to sort out its relationship to "black and brown movements on campus." Citing what it called "San Francisco State Fever," the Council noted that these black and brown movements had "to an increasing degree ... taken the initiative in, and the leadership of campus struggles." The Council complained that SDS's primary error in relating to the struggles involved uncritical acceptance of black leadership.[106]

But the new left's "uncritical acceptance of black leadership" was not the problem that black student leaders perceived in this period. One of the BSU leaders at SF State, Nesbit Crutchfield, for example, criticized white radicals for their *inability* to accept black leadership. Even though white leftists considered themselves "the vanguard" of the new left, many of them, said Crutchfield, were still "racists." "They found it very difficult, very, very difficult," Crutchfield explained, "to take directions and orders from a third world group." First, argued Crutchfield, "I think they found it difficult because it's never been done before"; and second,

> they found it difficult because in the past they had been accustomed to telling other people what to do and telling other people how good what they were doing for them was for them; and for the first time they found themselves doing something for not only the the third world people, but for themselves, and getting the direction from those third world people. And for white people no matter how radical they are this is very difficult. We are beginning to realize more clearly every day, that no matter how radical you are, being white in this society you are bombarded with so much racism that you can't help it if a little bit rubs off.[107]

RYM people, while supporting black nationalism in theory, saw problems in their response to the black-led struggles as well. Klonsky noted that the many black struggles, "all blowing up, one after another, left many newly developing chapters in a frenzy" and *politically* unprepared. "While the contradictions were sharpening each day for the small percentage of black students on the college campuses," Klonsky complained, "the white students were, as usual, thinking white."[108] Thus, the black and third world student struggles pushed all of RYM's tendencies to fortify their theoretical understandings of race, and strengthened their resolve to support the black nationalist struggle.

Simultaneously, U.S. and local government attacks upon the Panthers

intensified. In November 1968 San Francisco police raided the local Party headquarters. In January 1969, members of the United Slaves (US), a Los Angeles black cultural nationalist group, instigated by COINTELPRO forces, assassinated two local Panther leaders. And on April 2, 1969, New York police arrested the entire New York City Panther leadership, charging them with a massive conspiracy to carry out a bombing campaign in New York.[109] This conspiracy bust foreshadowed an entire wave of conspiracy busts across the nation: authorities arrested Panthers in virtually every city in which the Party operated.

In the wake then of the massive black and third world student uprising, and the intensifying campaign against the Panthers, RYM people sought to shore up their theoretical analysis of race and their practical support for the Panthers. In preparation for the March Austin National Council meeting, RYM people put forward four proposals: a James Gang proposal for an SDS summer-time white community organizing project that would counter PL's summer "work-in" proposal; two resolutions from Chicago's RYM people for a May Day action and for a program giving specific guidance in light of the black student struggles; and, most important from a theoretical perspective, another resolution from Chicago RYM people supporting the Panthers and formally repudiating PL's "Smash Racism ..." resolution.

The James Gang proposal, "Hot town: summer in the city, or , I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more," coauthored by Ayers and Jim Mellen, showed Mellen's more theoretical hand at work. More important still, it showed the radical influence that the black and third world student struggles and the repression against the Panthers had had on the James Gang actionists. In lines that directly attacked PL's old leftism and would later find fuller development in the Weatherman proposal, Ayers and Mellen argued that the "sharpest struggle against the ruling class" was that struggle "waged by the oppressed nations against U.S. imperialism." Contrary to PL's understanding of a class struggle that centered on the internal workings of the United States, Mellen and Ayers insisted that "all our actions must flow from our identity as part of an international struggle against U.S. imperialism." Moreover, "Hot town" argued for recognition of the "vanguard character of the black liberation struggle." To the James Gang RYM people this meant recognizing the black movement's importance to the new left. In a rare acknowledgement from SDSers, Ayers and Mellen explicitly recognized that:

> The black liberation struggle has been instrumental in winning much of the white movement to a clearer understanding of imperialism, class oppression within the U.S., the reactionary nature of pacificism, the need for armed struggle as the only road to revolution, and other essential truths which were not predominant within our movement in the past. It must be clear that setbacks to the vanguard are tremendous setbacks to the people's movement as a whole.

Above all, however, "Hot town" was a practical program of setting up a prototype organizing project in Detroit over the summer. The main object for the project would be to attempt to win white youth in Detroit neighborhoods to "a consciousness of solidarity with the black movement and of their own class position in imperialist America."[110] Thus, the actionist James Gang, pushed by PL's attack on black nationalism as well as the state's attacks on the Panthers, on the one hand, and by the Panthers' growing strength and the huge upsurge of black student struggle, on the other, articulated one of SDS's clearest statements of support for the black movement.

Chicago's two RYM proposals were not so concrete as the James Gang proposal, but nevertheless contained some important theoretical points. The May Day proposal reiterated the argument that white workers had a white skin privilege that tied them to national chauvinism and racism; that black worker struggles—such as black worker-led wildcats in the auto industry—were breaking down that chauvinism in white workers; and that, in general, as the U.S. empire came under increasing attack, so the material basis for chauvinism would be undermined.[111] RYM's "The Schools Must Serve the People" proposal came directly out of the RYM leadership's desire to avoid the "frenzy" and confusion it saw as chapters sought to orient themselves in relation to the burgeoning black and brown student struggles. Slim Coleman, author of the proposal, explicitly argued that "the key fight today is against white supremacy" and that that fight had been "raised primarily by the black liberation movement." The proposal's practical portions reiterated black and brown student demands for black studies programs, open admissions and an end to tracking.[112]

But the most important of the RYM proposals was the Panther-support proposal, "The Black Panther Party: toward the liberation of the colony." As with the "Hot town" proposal, "toward the liberation

of the colony" began by affirming that "the sharpest struggles in the world today" were the struggles of the oppressed "against imperialism and for national liberation." Within the U.S. "the sharpest struggle is that of the black colony for its liberation." The resolution then argued that the Panthers constituted the vanguard of the black liberation movement in the United States. As the vanguard, with its "correct and uncompromising leadership," the Panthers had brought down on themselves "the most vicious repression" from the government. With the number of Panthers killed, jailed or forced into exile daily mounting, Chicago's RYM people argued that it would be a "mockery" for SDS to do less than offer total support in defense of the Panthers. Moreover, support for the Panthers included the necessity for SDS to take on the strongest possible struggle against white supremacy, both outside and inside the movement.

Significantly, while the resolution praised the Panthers' entire ten point program, it singled out for special mention the Panthers' aim to create a "Black People's Army—a military force to be used not only in the defense of the black community but also for its liberation."[113] Thus, at a time when the Panthers were coming under increasing attack, and were themselves altering their practical program to deemphasize their military program and strengthen their community organizing program, RYM people were busy holding up the former.

Given SDS's emphasis on Panther militancy, manifest earlier in its rejection of the Panther electoral program, one older SDS member wondered pointedly whether "we really mean to follow them, or just let them get mowed down?"[114] It was a good question, and one that would have increasing weight over the next several months.

At the Austin NC the RYM proposals all passed and RYM forces succeeded in repudiating PL's line of black nationalism. But the real showdown loomed at SDS's annual national convention, slated for June in Chicago. The national conventions were particularly important because delegates elected SDS's national officers. At the previous convention SDS had elected Dohrn and Klonsky, both RYM people. Fred Gordon, a PL sympathizer or member, had been elected to the third national office. As a national officer Gordon did have a regular voice in *New Left Notes*, but as the representative of the minority tendency, Gordon complained that RYM continually suppressed his voice and PL's voice in the organization. If PL could mobilize for the June convention sufficient to win the national officers' elections, PL could more than exact revenge for the Austin defeat. Consequently, once again RYM people mobilized, politically and

practically for the coming struggle.

You Don't Need a Weatherman... RYM Splits

Of course, RYM was more than simply a coalition of three regional groupings. From the start RYM had included some people who were grappling to genuinely understand the tremendous struggle unfolding before their eyes so that they could better contribute to it. It also included those who more simply sought to throw themselves into the thick of the action, as leaders of course. By the late spring of 1969 what had been regional groupings had coalesced into two groupings based on emphasis. The numerically dominant group, RYM I, would become the Weathermen and represented an actionist approach, with Ayers, Rudd, Jacobs and Dohrn leading the group. RYM II, led by Klonsky, Coleman, Ignatin, and the San Francisco Bay Area's Bob Avakian, represented an approach more closely grounded in Marxism.

In preparation for the June convention the RYM I people prepared a lengthy political statement titled "You don't need a Weatherman to know which way the wind blows." Weatherman, as the paper and the tendency came to be known, reiterated much of what the earlier RYM proposals had argued, but in still sharper language and greater detail. The paper begins by arguing that since the U.S. is the center of world capitalism and imperialism, all struggle must be assessed from the standpoint of whether it aids or opposes U.S. imperialism. The relative affluence that exists in the U.S., Weatherman claimed, "is directly dependent upon the labor and natural resources of the Vietnamese, the Angolans, the Bolivians and the rest of the peoples of the Third World." Given that, "any conception of 'socialist revolution' simply in terms of the working people of the United States ... is a conception of a fight for a particular privileged interest." Blacks within the U.S. constituted an internal colony to the U.S. and their struggle was every bit as much a struggle against imperialism as were the struggles of other peoples external to the United States. Indeed, the black struggle within the U.S. "reflect[s] the interests of the oppressed people of the world from within the borders of the United States; they are part of the Third World and part of the international revolutionary vanguard." What made the black struggle within the U.S. especially significant, Weatherman argued, was the fact that it could not succeed without taking down the whole of U.S. imperialism.

To be sure, even in the sharp form that Weatherman laid out its argument most of what it said was not new. Carmichael had said as much

in 1966 when he rejected his "piece of the American pie" and the Panthers had been saying the same things for some time. Even in the early sixties Malcolm X had offered the same argument, minus the Marxist-type language. Perhaps it was significant, or perhaps it was simply an oversight, but Weatherman failed to explicitly acknowledge this intellectual debt.

Weatherman then proceeded to argue for the old RYM strategy—organizing working class youth was a transition to organizing the larger white working class. But, the paper cautioned, simply because RYM had not yet reached "a certain percentage of the working class" did not mean that it was not a working class movement.

> We are already that if we put forward internationalist proletarian politics. We also don't have to wait to become a revolutionary force. We must be a self-conscious revolutionary force from the beginning, not be a movement which takes issues to some mystical group—'THE PEOPLE'—who will make the revolution. We must be a revolutionary movement of people understanding the necessity to reach more people, all working people, as we make the revolution.

Having established itself as a revolutionary movement, Weatherman continued by laying out a "Hot town" community organizing perspective. More than "Hot town," however, Weatherman laid out its philosophical approach to organizing—a real actionist, James Gang approach:

> 'Relating to motion': the struggle activity, the action, of the movement demonstrates our existence and strength to people in a material way. Seeing it happen, people give it more weight in their thinking. For the participants, involvement in struggle is the best education about the movement, the enemy and the class struggle. ... We must build a movement oriented toward power. Revolution is a power struggle, and we must develop that understanding among people from the beginning.

What did this mean in practice? As an example, Weatherman argued that rather than making a demand that the schools "should serve the people"—taking a swipe at Coleman's Austin NC resolution—RYM should be calling instead for shutting the schools down. Why? "Kids are ready for the full scope of militant struggle, and already demonstrate a consciousness of imperialism, such that struggles for a people-serving

school would not raise the level of their struggle to its highest possible point."[115] RYM did not need to take on the hard work of winning people to an understanding of imperialism and racism. Young white people already understood that. What these young people needed was not an explanation of the problem, but a demonstration of the solution—action. (Hence, "you don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows.") Perhaps it is for this reason that while Weatherman goes on at some length about the character of the black struggle and the need to support it, it only mentions in passing racism and white supremacy *in the white community* as a problem for RYM to specifically tackle.

Thus Weatherman answered the question of how they would make revolution in two opposing ways. On the one hand, Weatherman designated the international struggle against imperialism as vanguard of the socialist revolution. Within the United States itself Weatherman assigned the vanguard status to the black struggle, as representative of the world anti-colonial struggle. On the other hand, Weatherman posited no necessary practical connection to that vanguard. On the contrary, Weatherman derived an authority for itself simply by recognizing the international character of the struggle. "We ... don't have to wait to become a revolutionary force" or a working class movement. "We are already that if we put forward internationalist proletarian politics." Weatherman, like other SDS tendencies in the past, managed to salvage a vanguard role for itself—it could yet play a defining role in the social drama of its time.

In the face of the actionists having consolidated a RYM proposal, the core of the Chicago RYM people responded with "Revolutionary Youth Movement II." Unlike Weatherman, RYM II was far more a traditional Marxist reading of revolution, especially with its emphasis on the "industrial proletariat." Nevertheless, RYM II also began with a reiteration of the RYM line: "the principal contradiction in the world is that between U.S. imperialism and the oppressed nations." The working class in the United States, if it were to assume the role of carrying the struggle against U.S. imperialism to the end, would have to "link up its struggles with those of the oppressed peoples." To establish that link, however, would require that white workers take up "as their own slogan the right to self-determination for the nations oppressed by U.S. imperialism."

But what was most curious about the RYM II proposal was what it said about the black struggle. SNCC and the Panthers had both defined

the conditions of blacks in the U.S. as being colonial in nature. But neither SNCC nor the Panthers had defined the parameters of that colony. Implicitly, the Panthers' ten point program suggested that all blacks were members of the colony—the Panthers demanded that all blacks be permitted to vote in a plebiscite on the status of an independent black nation within the U.S. Practically, the Panthers called for black community control of the institutions that affected the black community. But if the two most significant black nationalist organizations of the latter sixties had not defined the black colony, that was no reason for white new leftists not to. RYM II went back to the deliberations of the Communist International in 1928 and discovered that a black nation existed in the black belt region of the South. White workers, RYM II insisted, had to support the self-determination of the black-belt nation. And unlike Weatherman, RYM II at least acknowledged that it would have to organize white workers against white skin privilege in order to win that demand for self-determination. And, RYM II also at least paid lip service to the extant black liberation movement: it would also seek to organize white workers to support for all democratic rights for blacks, including the right to community control of the institutions affecting the black community.

With the caveat of a black nation, RYM II returned to the more traditional Marxist industrial proletariat as ultimate grave digger of capitalism. "We will never be able to destroy U.S. imperialism," RYM II argued, "unless the proletariat—white, brown, and black—is brought solidly into the anti-imperialist movement. ... imperialism is not in the interests of the mass of the working class."[116]

Thus, contrary to Carmichael's argument three years earlier—that the oppressor cannot be allowed to define the struggle of the oppressed—and contrary to the very notion that blacks should determine their own destiny, RYM II sought to define the nature of the black struggle that it would support.

Thus, in some important respects both Weatherman and RYM II represent retreats from positions taken at the Austin NC. Weatherman represented a strengthening of the actionist James Gang tendency that had, to a certain extent, been submerged with the "Hot town" proposal. In retreating to a Comintern position from 1928, RYM II had definitely slipped back to an older Marxist analysis. Moreover, both Weatherman and RYM II represented a retreat from the Panthers as vanguard proposal. Both RYM factions had, in short, taken steps to reassert their definitions

of the nature of the struggle.

The Repression, PL's Expulsion and the United Front against Fascism

In September 1968 the *New York Times* reported that J. Edgar Hoover considered the Panthers to be "the greatest [single] threat to the internal security of the country."[117] Hoover and his COINTELPRO consequently intensified their targeting of the Panthers. Between January 1969 and December 1969, police raids and COINTELPRO-fostered activities took the lives of 28 Black Panther members.[118] From April to December police raided Panther offices in most of the major cities in which the Party had chapters: New York, San Francisco, Chicago, Salt Lake City, Indianapolis, Denver, San Diego, Sacramento and Los Angeles. Media scare tactics accompanied all the major busts. In September alone, police arrested Panthers in forty-six distinct incidents.[119]

This massive repression had a contradictory impact on SDS. On the one hand, it definitely pushed the new left to defend the Panthers and to understand the significance of the attack being waged upon them. But the repression decisively weakened the Panthers and undermined their ability to work in their own communities. It also undermined the Panthers' ability to guide and check the new left, to remind the new left of the real base of social struggle in contemporary America. In the past the black movement had had the ability to check SDS's vanguardist tendencies, i.e., to bring SDS back down to earth. Whether expressed organizationally through SNCC or the Panthers, or simply through massive social struggles, as in the summer of 1967, or the Martin Luther King riots, the black movement had the gravitational pull to continually orient SDS's understandings of the nature of the society, and of new left activists' own identities as young white people. Now, however, the government's assault on the Panthers was dissipating the black movement's gravity and creating the conditions wherein SDS could spin off into its vanguardist fantasies.

SDS's phenomenal growth—the organization more than doubled in size from April 1968 to November 1968—added further fuel to these fantasies and made the black movement's job of checking the new left all the more difficult. If in 1966, with 15,000 members, SDS could conceive of itself as "the most creative force on the left"—how would its leaders conceive of themselves with 80,000 or 100,000 members? Moreover, if even the high tides of black struggle could elicit self-criticism and a degree

of humility from SDS only by way of exception, what effect would the dismemberment of the largest black nationalist organization have upon SDS?

One white Panther supporter summarized what she saw as the impact of the repression against the Panthers on white new leftists:

> A lot of movement people have resigned themselves to being witnesses of the destruction of the Black Panther Party. We chant 'off the pig,' but don't mean it. We affirm support for the BPP, but give none in practice. Some would like to provide support, but don't know how. Others, find all sorts of excuses for not supporting the Panthers, 'they're taking a bad line,' etc. Some are even honest enough to use the rats- leaving-a-sinking-ship metaphor. The Panthers have many fair weather ideological friends.[120]

One further factor affected the RYMs's ability to see themselves as having transcended the constraints of their social position: the expulsion of PL at the June national convention. On one level, SDS was certainly warranted in expelling the conservative PL. PL had a consolidated line that opposed the actual struggles that black people were waging, both on the campuses and in the communities. PL's conservatism, indeed racism, was no more clearly exposed than in its position on campus struggles. As a number of SDS observers noted, while PL opposed open admissions for black students to colleges, it simultaneously "called for preferential hiring of black and brown nonacademic campus employees." In other words, PL "called for more black maids and janitors to clean up after white students while opposing" the struggles of those workers' children "against racist admissions policies." The RYMs then justly celebrated their expulsion of PL as "historic." It was, one RYM IIer explained, the first time since 1866 that a predominantly white organization had "split over the issue of white supremacy and support for the black liberation struggle." Radical whites, in failing to consistently carry out that kind of struggle, had condemned themselves to "copping out and scabbing on the liberation struggle of black people."[121] The danger in PL's expulsion, however, was simply this: having dramatically rid itself of a racist force, SDS, unchecked by the strength of the black movement, could foist off onto PL all its own white supremacy. In other words, PL could serve as the white supremacist "other" to SDS's purity and anti-white supremacism.

Consequences: The repression, SDS's growth, and PL's expulsion all

came together in July 1969 at the Panthers' conference to build a United Front Against Fascism. Unable to cope with the government's repression, the Panthers pulled out all stops to call in its allies to help. Specifically, the Panthers called for a petition campaign for "community control of the police" that would be carried out in both the black and white communities. In black communities the police would be controlled by the black communities and in white communities by the white community. This was to be the main mechanism by which the Panthers would get their message out. In effect, the Panthers were asking SDS to take the notion of black self-determination into racist white communities. And, at a time when the government assault against the Panthers was at its height, both Weatherman and RYM II united, and rejected the Panther program.

SDS's rejection of the Panther program was characteristic. National Interim Committee members—Rudd, Jones, Ayers, Machtinger and Phoebe Hirsch from Weatherman, and Avakian, Ignatin and Klonsky from RYM II—issued a statement explaining their decision. They began their statement in typical RYM fashion:

> SDS participation in the UFAF conference was based on our complete support of the black liberation struggle and of the leadership of that struggle, especially the Black Panther Party. At a time when the black and brown peoples and the Panthers and other organizations are facing increasingly brutal fascist attacks by the ruling class and their agents, the police, all revolutionaries must defend those who are leading the anti-imperialist struggle. Strategically, this defense, this attack on fascism is accomplished by continuing to build the anti-imperialist movement; our part of the task is to involve the white working class in the struggle against imperialism. This can only be done by winning whites to support and fight on the side of black and brown people within this country, and on the side of all oppressed and colonized peoples abroad.

SDS then lectured the Panthers on the significance of combating white supremacy and class politics. Unless SDS attacked white supremacy it could not build a real working class solidarity, a "revolutionary internationalist consciousness," but would instead only continue chauvinism and racism. SDS wholly supported community control of the police in black and brown communities. But white community control of the police deflected the issues of fascism, racism and self-determination

by creating a "parity" between communities which, because of white supremacy, weren't equal. Moreover, class divided white communities and SDS stood only for the working class.

Finally, the two RYM factions also worried about the use of the legal tactic of petitioning. While not raising "principled opposition" to legal forms of struggle, SDS patiently explained to the Panthers the significance of using militant tactics:

> we should understand that at this time smashing the illusion of reform through voting and other capitalist channels is a priority in the building of a revolutionary anti-imperialist movement. The level of struggle is being raised and should continue to be raised among white youth. This is a necessity in building the 'fighting force' which will eventually defeat imperialism.[122]

Here then was the denouement of an era. From 1966 to 1969 the black movement had forced SDS to define and redefine its understandings of the world, pushing SDS from "protest to resistance," and from resistance to revolution. It had repeatedly urged SDS to take on racism in the white community. Despite continual resistance to that charge—stronger at times of black movement quiescence and weaker at times of black movement strength—SDS, in a variety of RYM proposals, slowly came to define its role in just such terms. But now, the Panthers, whom SDS three months earlier had designated the vanguard of the revolution, had posed the question to SDS point blank: will you support us on the terms that we are asking for your support? And SDS—both remaining factions—answered in unqualified fashion. "No. What you have asked of us does not accord with our conception of ourselves as revolutionaries."

Without the slightest hint of irony, Susan Stern, a Weatherman supporter, described the problem as she saw it. The Panthers, she complained, seemed to be "stepping back from armed struggle and militancy" at the very moment Weatherman was "gearing to become urban guerrillas." When the Panthers, following SDS's rejection of UFAF, denounced Weatherman as adventurists and refused to work with any SDS faction, Weatherman was shocked. "It was hard to follow a vanguard who despised you," Stern concluded.[123] Thus, Stern neatly summarized the united RYM's position: RYM would willingly follow a black vanguard whose requests coincided with RYM's inclinations. But if that vanguard requested something that RYM rejected, this was clearly a problem for the vanguard, and not for RYM. And the Panthers, and the black nationalist

movement it represented, reeling from government attacks, no longer had the strength to call the RYMs to task for this desertion.

What remained was to dot the i's and cross the t's.

The End of SDS

Weatherman, completely secure in the understandings of imperialism and white supremacy it had achieved over the last year, rapidly spun to a position of white exceptionalism over the next several months. RYM II, on the other hand, having successfully defined the existence of a black nation that neither the Panthers nor SNCC had asked for, quickly splintered into a host of tiny vanguard parties.

Two projects defined Weatherman's descent into white exceptionalism: its summer urban organizing projects and its organizing for a projected national anti-war action in Chicago in October. Weatherman's summer organizing in Detroit became a model Weatherman held up to SDS nationally. Two actions, in particular, became famous: the Metro Beach riot and McComb Community College action. Following the line of the Weatherman proposal, Weatherman determined to create a strong presence for the international revolution in Detroit's white working class communities. Consequently, one hot summer afternoon a squad of Weathermen swept across a white working class beach, Metro Beach, distributing literature for the Chicago national action and carrying a Viet Cong flag. They set up camp under the flag and began engaging in heated arguments with the crowd that assembled around them. Finally, a group of working class youth attacked the Weathermen and, according to *New Left Notes,* Weatherman fought them to a "standstill." Still carrying the flag, Weatherman then marched off the beach. While people's reactions varied widely, Weatherman proudly claimed that it had confronted "kids on the beach ... with the fact that we were taking sides with the Vietnamese and the blacks." This, after all, was the job Weatherman had designated for itself.

At McComb Community College, nine Weather women invaded a class of 40 to 50 students taking a sociology final. One of the Weather women began a rap on "how American imperialism fucks over the people of the world" and on imperialism's oppression of the black colony, as the other Weather women barricaded the classroom. When the teacher attempted to leave to call the police, the Weather women, trained in karate, stopped him. Weatherman was particularly proud that this was a women's action: they succeeded in confronting male supremacy at the same time as

they were confronting the white students with "with their dual position in capitalist society"—i.e., as oppressors and oppressed. The Detroit experience, Weatherman claimed, had wholly borne out the Weather analysis:

> We've become fighters this summer ... Our words have content because they are backed up by a growing base of power. Opening a new front here at home can only be achieved by striking blows at the enemy and building a movement that understands that to aid the Vietnamese and blacks we must develop a white fighting force that FIGHTS![124]

Following the same tactics in Columbus Ohio, Chicago, New York, Pittsburgh and a number of other cities, Weatherman organizers forecast a massive national action in Chicago in October. "The National Action is building fast," trumpeted Dohrn, Robbins and Kathy Boudin. In cities all across the country "people are digging on the action—and digging on SDS." SDS's experience in organizing for the action was confirming the truth of Weatherman politics: "putting forward our politics in an aggressive way was the ONLY way to organize the masses of people in this country."

But despite the glowing forecasts, hints of trouble appeared. First, both the Chicago Panther chapter and the militant Puerto Rican nationalist group, the Young Lords Organization, "raised strong reservations about the action." Indeed, Chicago Panther leader Fred Hampton denounced Weatherman as adventuristic and "Custeristic." But this didn't phase Weatherman. Resorting to an argument that they had used in rejecting the Panther request for Carl Oglesby's candidacy, Weatherman insisted that while the black and brown movements did not need the kind of action that Weatherman was projecting, whites, "riddled by timidity" and lacking experience in the struggle, did.[125] Second, RYM II broke off its work for the national action and focused instead on building its own separate national action. In announcing his resignation from the national action staff, Klonsky complained that the movement would not succeed "without the working class as its main component." Weatherman was running its action, Klonsky argued, as if it did not care whether it would win the working class to anti-imperialism.[126]

But the most serious indication of a problem came in a speech by Weatherman leader Bill Ayers. Ayers acknowledged that people were criticizing Weatherman's leadership of the national action as adventurist.

Ayers denied the charge, explaining that adventurism happened when a group lost confidence in the people, believed that it could not organize people. More importantly, Ayers claimed that it would be impossible for Weatherman to be adventuristic:

> if it is a worldwide struggle, if Weatherman is correct in that basic thing, that the basic struggle in the world today is the struggle of the oppressed peoples against US imperialism, then it is the case that nothing we could do in the mother country could be adventurist. Nothing we could do because there is a war going on already, and the terms of that war are set. We couldn't be adventurist while there is genocide going on in Vietnam and in the black community.[127]

Weatherman, according to Ayers, had correctly grasped the central contradiction in the world. If "kids"did not respond to Weatherman's tactics, the fault would lie with these young white people, and not with Weatherman. The Weatherman paper had already established the foundations of Weatherman's legitimacy. Simply by affirming the leadership of the oppressed nations and the black colony, Weatherman secured itself from the historic shortcomings of white radical leadership. And, if Weatherman could legitimate its own leadership against the Panthers, it certainly would be no problem to secure that leadership against masses of young white people, or rather, against the failure of those young white people to respond to Weatherman's leadership. It did not matter that of the tens of thousands of "kids" that Weatherman projected as coming to the National Action, less than 600 hard core SDSers actually showed up. Weatherman had become the exceptional white people in the world, those few whites who understood and acted on the reality of U.S. imperialism and racism. The failure of other whites to take up the Weatherman line and practice only confirmed the exceptional white identity.

In being exceptional whites, however, Weatherman had only reinscribed its own whiteness in the world. The black movement had repeatedly asked white radicals to find the means to organize greater numbers of whites to an anti-racist solidarity. Weatherman had only found another excuse for rejecting that leadership and charge.

Rudd, Jones and Ayers—all Weathermen—had been elected SDS's national officers at the June National Convention. But if following the Weatherman line was the way to be revolutionary, and if the bulk of the

SDS membership rejected that leadership, what purpose would there be in having an organization of tens of thousands? There would be none. After the Chicago national action, Weatherman leadership would scuttle SDS, the largest radical student organization in American history.

And RYM II? In its projection of a black colony in the black belt South and in its definition of a leading role for a multi-racial working class in the United States, RYM II had already rejected the Panthers. When it joined Weatherman in rejecting the Panthers' UFAF strategy, it only signaled the earlier rejection. As with Weatherman, the Panthers would be a vanguard only so long as they offered a leadership that RYM II could agree with.

RYM II's leaders had always been more theoretically inclined than Weatherman's leadership. Most of them seem to have come out of a Marxist tradition. And RYM II, while it proclaimed the vanguard role of the oppressed nations against imperialism, also retained a leading role for the industrial proletariat in the U.S. With the decline of the Panthers and the deterioration of the black struggle, RYM II more and more stressed the latter position. And, if organizing the workers, even in the transitional youth movement strategy, was central, what good was there in a national student organization, the bulk of whose membership did not understand or appreciate the nuances of the class struggle? RYM II would thus not step forward to salvage SDS. Moreover, in the absence of the kind of check on white radical leadership provided by the black movement, RYM II splintered into a number of Marxist, Marxist-Leninist, Marxist-Leninist-Maoist vanguard parties. While these parties—most notably the October League and Revolutionary Union—disagreed on the finer points of many issues, they agreed on one thing: subordinating the black struggle to the class struggle.

Conclusion: "The Fire Next Time"

> If we—and now I mean the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of the others—do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not now dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, recreated from the Bible in song by a slave, is upon us: *God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next*

time!"[128]

—James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time,* 1963

Writing a history of the new left in 1969, Staughton Lynd observed that the white new left's development "typically followed that of the black movement with a lag of one or two years." SNCC, Lynd explained, had turned to off-campus community organizing in 1961; SDS began ERAP only at the end of 1963. SNCC supported draft resistance at the end of 1965; SDS only came to the same position one year later. Black radicals aligned themselves with Third World struggles as early as 1965; SDS did not really express clear solidarity with Third World liberation until 1968.[129] But Lynd understated the reality. The new left did not simply tail the black movement. Rather the new left was incomprehensible outside the context of the black struggle's social and intellectual leadership. Millions of black people moved to win their freedom in American society during the 1950s and 1960s. Black intellectual and organizational leadership complemented, structured, called into being, and was itself called into being by this vast social motion. Situated at the bottom of American society, black people's social motion and their intellectual articulations upset all the ideological assumptions upon which the society rested. This is why the United States, whose left traditionally has trailed Europe's left, developed a new left years before Europe did so.[130]

In the period in which the black movement was ascendant, black social motion sharply challenged ideologies of race and racial identities. If the new left was never able to consolidate a revolutionary understanding of race in American society during this period, neither was it able to consolidate any new, more sanitized versions of white supremacist thinking. On the contrary, as frequently as notions of white paternalism or exceptionalism or white racelessness raised themselves, just so frequently did they fall before the onslaught of a black social struggle that damned them as false. What made the new left new and vibrant was precisely its *inability* to consolidate a false understanding of race.

White supremacist ideology does not only define black people, it defines whites as well. Certainly, through racism whites dehumanize blacks; they transform blacks into objects that serve whites. But white people cannot dehumanize racial Others with impunity and cannot seal off those whom they will dehumanize from those they will not. The French liberals, for example, used to complain, perversely, that French torture of

Algerians was making monsters of the French. If the liberals misplaced their concerns, they nevertheless accurately perceived a problem.[131] Ultimately, to dehumanize an Other is to dehumanize oneself. By dehumanizing black people, white society thus cast judgment against itself: it banished itself from all human solidarity and condemned itself to the most profound human alienation. Thus, as early as 1963, James Baldwin told whites that if they were to ever regain "a fruitful communion with the depths of" their own being, if they were to ever be free, then the "price of the[ir] liberation ... is the liberation of the blacks—the total liberation, in the cities, in the towns, before the law, and in the mind."[132]

Thus, black social motion upset not only the structural oppression of black people, but of white people as well. By challenging white supremacist ideology and keeping it off balance, the black movement allowed whites to glimpse a different, more humane future for themselves. Hence, so long as the black movement was strong enough to prevent SDS from consolidating new, more sophisticated white supremacist understandings, the new left could grow, could offer young whites a real alternative to the deadening society in which they lived.

When the black movement's ascendancy ended, when repression and the movement's own internal contradictions halted its growth, SDS members could consolidate variants of white supremacist ideology, new ways of seeing themselves that continued to place themselves in the center of the universe. In reaffirming the centrality of whites, however, these new lines of thought only shut the door on any real possibility of liberation. Whatever organizational forms it would take in the future, SDS, as a new left, was dead.

As a matter of fact, however, black social motion had served as the glue that held SDS together organizationally as well. Lines of white exceptionalism, paternalism, racelessness and lines which subordinated race to class could not consolidate themselves in SDS without rebuke from the black movement. Hence, these different forms of white supremacist ideology would remain only tendencies within a united SDS so long as the black movement was strong. As repression intensified on the black movement, however, it became increasingly difficult for that movement to exercise any control over the white movement. Consequently, these separate tendencies within SDS could each consolidate adherents and force SDS to splinter along the different lines of white exceptionalism and white racelessness.

Here then was the tragedy: for a few brief moments young white

people had the possibility of really "daring everything" in a drama that allowed them to be part of bringing a greater justice and humanity to the world. They were willing to dare much in that quest, including their lives. But they were unable to risk what was most important and difficult—their identities as white people.

AFTERWORD

BY NOEL IGNATIEV

With David Barber's general point, that the New Left failed because it was not radical enough, and that its conservatism was manifest in the inability of white activists to de-racialize themselves, I could not agree more. I *disagree* with his use of SDS's stance toward black leadership in general and the Black Panther Party in particular as the principal measure of its advances and retreats. The true test of so-called radical whites is their willingness to challenge the cohesion, indeed, the very existence, of the "white community." Measured by that yardstick, *every* political tendency in SDS fell short. Moreover, every one found a way to rationalize its dereliction. "Following black leadership" and "Supporting the BPP" served that function for the grouping I was associated with. Whatever merit there may have been in recognizing the leading role of black people historically and in the struggles of the day, "following black leadership" became for many a substitute for confronting whiteness. And however important it may have been to rally in defense of an organization under government attack, it was wrong for SDS to anoint the BPP or any other organization the "vanguard" of the black liberation movement. I did not originate that policy, but I went along with it for a while, and I regret having done so.

The editors did not commission this article. We are publishing it because we think it is a serious, thoughtful examination of experience, which will prove valuable to a new generation of activists. As for me, my work with *Race Traitor* represents both a continuation of and a break with what I was doing then.

NOTES:

[1]. Bernardine Dohrn. "White Mother Country Radicals." *New Left Notes.* July 29, 1968. p.5.

[2]. Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973.) p.36.

[3]. Sale. pp.663-4.

[4]. For the purposes of this paper I will not deal with the postmodernist school. David Farber and his *Chicago, '68.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988); and his edited collection, *The Sixties .... From Memory to History.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994) are the preeminent representatives of this school. This school is the smallest and currently the least significant of the schools. Because the postmodernists sidestep most of the questions I am interested in, I see no need to put my work in relation to theirs.

[5]. See, for example, Todd Gitlin. *The Sixties, Years of Hope, Days of Rage.* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987.) p.163-4. Edward P. Morgan. *The 60s Experience, Hard Lessons About Modern America.* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991.) p.112. Morgan also points out that Berkeley's activists received training in the San Francisco civil rights activities of the early 1960s. W.J. Rorabaugh. *Berkeley at War in the 1960s.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.) p. 20.

[6]. See, for example, Gitlin's book as well as Tom Hayden's *Reunion.* (New York: Collier Books, 1988). Morgan's book also takes the same essential line, though it articulates that line in slightly different terms.

[7]. See, for example, Wini Breines. *Community and Organization in the New Left: 1962-1968: The Great Refusal.* (S. Hadley [Mass]: Praeger, 1982). and "Whose New Left?". *The Journal of American History.* September, 1988. Breines is a fine champion for the New Left and quite correctly brands the liberal historiographic school as an "old boy's club." See also, Kirkpatrick Sale's *SDS.* Sale sets up the conflict between new and old left (in the form of one of SDS's factions, the Progressive Labor

Party) as the basis for SDS's demise. He does not critically scrutinize SDS's understandings of race or of gender, though he retells a number of the notorious incidents of male chauvinism in the organization. Also see Massimo Teodori and Carl Oglesby in their respective introductions to collections of new left writings. *The New Left: A Documentary History.* Teodori, ed. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1969); and *The New Left Reader*, Oglesby, ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1969). Both offer fine defenses of the the new left's articulated principles, and both fail to really measure the new left's deeds against those stated principles.

[8]. Doug Rossinow. *The Politics of Authenticity, Liberalism, Christianity and the New Left in America.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); and "The New Left in the Counterculture: Hypotheses and Evidence." *Radical History Review* 67. Winter 1997. p.93. Alice Echols. *Daring to be Bad* . (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.)

[9]. *New Left Notes*. June 17, 1966. p.3; *NLN*. June 2, 1966. p.3.

[10]. Greg Calvert. "In White America: Radical Consciousness and Social Change" in Teodori. pp.413-415.

[11]. "Proposal for 'BLACK POWER DAY' in Berkeley." Berkeley Campus SDS. October 1966. Social Protest Collection (BANC MSS 86/157c) Carton 17:4. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[12]. Letter. November 22, 1966. SDS N. Cal. Regional Office. Social Protest Collection (BANC MSS 86/157c) Carton 17:4. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

[13]. Of course, I am not speaking here of a one-to-one correspondence between black social motion's rise and fall and white new leftists' appreciation or forgetfulness of race. Individuals and consciousness never accord so neatly with their social environment. What I hold is that the organization as a whole understood race, through the thoughts it articulated and in its practice, in correspondence with the *general* pattern of black social activity.

[14]. David Roediger. *The Wages of Whiteness*. (New York: Verso Press, 1991.)

[15]. *NY Times*. June 17, 1966. p.33.

[16]. *Newsweek*. Index for July 4, 1966 to Dec. 26, 1966. Listing for "Negroes."

[17]. Clayborne Carson. *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981.)

[18]. Stokely Carmichael. "What We Want." *New York Review of Books*. September 22, 1966. pp.6-8. When Carmichael first raised the cry of "Black Power" critics charged that the term was ambiguous. Certainly "What We Want" had its share of ambiguities as did Carmichael's subsequent book, *Black Power*, coauthored with sociologist Charles Hamilton. But what white society and old-line civil rights organizations hated and feared and reviled was not Black Power's ambiguities, but its clarity and its popularity. On the one hand, Black Power, as Carmichael clearly articulated it in "What We Want," rejected liberal notions of America as basically good, and insisted that at its root the U.S. was racist and exploitative; and that all whites, whether they sought it or not, were privileged as a result of the subordinate position of masses of black people.

[19]. W.J. Rorabaugh. p. 41.

[20]. Stokely Carmichael. "Black Power and its Challenges." Address to Black Power Day Conference. Academic Publishing. Lecture Transcripts. October 1966. Social Protest Collection (BANC MSS 86/157c) Carton 17:5. The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. p.2.

[21]. Carmichael. "Black Power and its Challenges." pp.7-9.

[22]. Todd Gitlin. *Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. p.349. *New Left Notes*. June 24, 1966. p.2.

[23]. Staughton Lynd. "On White People." *New Left Notes*. August 24,

1966. p.18. In Echols cites Lynd describing the basis for the new left's transition to anti-draft work during this period.

[24]. quoted in Alice Echols' *Daring to be Bad.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989. p.39.

[25]. Sale. p. 102. James Forman. *The Making of Black Revolutionaries.* (New York: MacMillan Press, 1972.) p.452. Forman contends that very early on, prior to 1962, SNCC's black activists were pushing for white radicals to work in the white community.

[26]. Tom Hayden. *Reunion.* p. 120.

[27]. Richard Rothstein. "Evolution of the ERAP Organizers." p.280.

[28]. Sale. p.104.

[29]. Donald Jackson. "an open letter to erap." *New Left Notes.* August 5, 1966. P.3.

[30]. Mike James. "ERAP Report JOIN." *New Left Notes.* August 24, 1966. p.8.

[31]. Nell Irvin Painter points out that racism is not just a problem for black people, but a problem for whites.

[32]. Clarence Walker. Discussions with the author.

[33]. See, for example, Robert Allen's *Reluctant Reformers.* (Washington: Howard University Press, 1974). Socialists, Communists, union organizers, women's suffragists and reformists in general all considered blacks as having particular problems that stood in the way of their contributing to improving the human condition.

[34]. Carol Stevens. "SDS re-examined at Dec. Conference." *New Left Notes.* Jan. 21, 1966. p.1. The excerpt is from a paper by Webb and Booth titled, "The Anti-War Movement: From Protest to Radical Politics."

[35]. Paul Booth. "National Secretary's Report." *New Left Notes.* June 17, 1966. p.3.

[36]. Carol Stevens. *NLN.* Jan. 21, 1966. p.1

[37]. Al Haber. "Radical Education Project—Draft for Discussion and Comment." *New Left Notes.* March 25, 1966.

[38]. Paul Booth. "letter to sncc." *New Left Notes.* June 10, 1966. p.2.

[39]. Robin Brooks. "Leroi [sic] Jones in Atlanta: BLACK POWER AND WHITE LIBERALS." *New Left Notes.* September 2, 1966. p.1

[40]. James Baldwin. *The Fire Next Time.* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1964.) p.141.

[41]. Brooks. p.3.

[42]. John Saari. "Berkeley, Stanford and Black Power." *New Left Notes.* November 4, 1966. p.1.

[43]. "Black Power Conference." *New Left Notes.* December 9, 1966. p.8.

[44]. Alen [sic] Jehlen. "Black Power and Political Strategy." *New Left Notes.* November 11, 1966, p.1.

[45]. "December Conference & NC." *New Left Notes.* November 18, 1966. p.5.

[46]. Gitlin. "On Organizing the Poor in America." *New Left Notes.* December 23, 1966. pp.1, 4.

[47]. Earl Silbar. "Race Wars and White Radicals." *New Left Notes.* June 12, 1967. p.3.

[48]. Robert Gottlieb, Gerry Tenney and David Gilbert. "Toward a Theory of Social Change in America." *New Left Notes.* June 22, 1967. pp.3-6. The same convention issue of *New Left Notes* also presented another

ERAP promotion, "Potentials for the Poor" by Todd Gitlin (pp.13-19). Once again, Gitlin reiterated ERAP's strategy of subsuming blacks under the rubric of "the poor." Moreover, and as in his earlier ERAP promotion, Gitlin failed to describe racism as a problem for the white poor and as something white organizers needed to challenge.

[49]. In the summer of 1964 Martha Reeves and the Vandellas released their hit dance tune, "Dancing in the Streets." The song provides a roll call of cities in which major urban rebellions would occur.

[50]. Malcolm X. *Malcolm X Speaks.* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld Press, 1990 [1965].) p.155.

[51]. Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. (New York: Bantam Books, 1968.) p.38.

[52]. Malcolm X. p.155.

[53]. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. p.39-40.

[54]. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. pp.32, 69, 106-7.

[55]. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. p.540.

[56]. *New Left Notes.* August 7, 1967. p.7.

[57]. 1967's black rebellions have garnered little historiographical attention. Monographs have appeared concerning 1965's Watt's uprising; the struggle in Birmingham, including the 1963 rioting; the backdrop to Detroit's 1967 riot and on the Newark rebellion. These few works aside, historians have done remarkably little with the greatest, most visible, most violent and arguably the most effective actions in the black struggle—the urban rebellions of the mid- and late-1960s. Perhaps this reflects the "political" and intellectual historical biases of today's historians.

[58]. Tom Hayden. *Rebellion in Newark.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967.) Hayden, then organizing in Newark's ERAP project, managed to crank out a small book on the Newark uprising within weeks of the event. As distinct from the Kerner Commission Report which claimed that a total

of 24 people died in Newark's rebellion, Hayden reported that 24 blacks died as well as the white policeman and fireman. Hayden lists the victims by name and by the means by which they died; Steve Block. "There's a Change Gonna Come." *New Left Notes.* July 24, 1967. p.1.

[59]. Eric Mann. "Newark Riots—NCUP Views." *New Left Notes.* July 24, 1967. p.1.

[60]. Block. p.1; Hayden. *Rebellion in Newark.* pp.4; 68-70.

[61]. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. pp.95, 100.

[62]. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. Charts. Rebellions occurred in Jackson, Mississippi in early May, involving National Guard mobilization and at least one death; Houston in mid-May; Cincinnati in mid-June involving National Guard troop mobilization; Atlanta in mid-June; Tampa, Florida in mid-June involving National Guard mobilization; Dayton, Ohio in mid-June and again in mid-September; Plainfield, New Jersey at the same time as Newark and involving National Guard mobilization and the alleged killing of a white policeman by black youths; Elizabeth, New Brunswick, Paterson and Jersey City, New Jersey following hard on the heels of Newark in mid-July; Englewood, New Jersey, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Phoenix, Arizona during the same period as Detroit; Cambridge, Maryland in the same period and involving mobilization of National Guard troops; Milwaukee at the end of July and beginning of August, involving National Guard mobilization; and New Haven, Connecticut in mid-August.

[63]. Marilyn Buck. "In the Interim." *New Left Notes.* August 21, 1967. p.7. Floyd Glasby. "black and white rebellion." August 21, 1967. p.6.

[64]. Bob Lawson and Mike James. "Poor White Response to Black Rebellion." *New Left Notes.* August 21, 1967. p.2.

[65]. James Forman. *The Making of Black Revolutionaries.* p.502.

[66]. Rennie Davis and Staughton Lynd. "On NCNP." *New Left Notes.* September 4, 1867. p.1; Alan Jehlen. "The NCNP Convention ... William

Pepper's Lonely Hearts' Club Band." *New Left Notes*. October 9, 1967. p.4. Pepper was one of the NCNP's principal leaders at the time.

[67]. Sale. p.375. Sale quotes the Resistance leader, Stuart McRae, in a footnote but fails to comment on the reference to the "summer riots," indeed, pays no special attention anywhere to the impact the riots had on SDS leaders and members. Sale is quite right when he says that fall 1967's resistance on campuses, for example, in "its extent, [and] its militance...were...at unexpected heights." But for Sale, this heightened and broadened militance arises from SDS's own internal processes and not from the example and power of black social motion.

[68]. quoted in Rorabaugh. p.116.

[69]. Karen Wald. "The Promise of Oakland." *New Left Notes*. November 6, 1967. pp.1-2. Sale. p.376.

[70]. Ronald Fraser. *1968. A Student Generation in Revolt.* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1988.) p.134.

[71]. Sale. p.383. Michael Goldfield. "The Washington Siege of '67. Power at the Pentagon." *New Left Notes*. October 30, 1967. pp.1, 2.

[72]. Liberation News Service. "From Protest to Resistance. Students Battle Cops." *New Left Notes*. October 23, 1967. p.1.

[73]. Fraser. p.134.

[74]. "Brooklyn College Strike." *New Left Notes*. October 23, 1967. p.4.

[75]. Carl Davidson. "Toward Institutional Resistance." *New Left Notes*. November 13, 1967. p.1. Sale. p.378.

[76]. Davidson. "Toward Institutional Resistance." p.3.

[77]. Karen Gellen. "we made the news today oh boy..." *New Left Notes*. February 26, 1968. p.7. Karen Gellen. "we made the news today oh boy..." *New Left Notes*. February 12, 1968. p.7. At Columbia University, for example, a fife and drum demonstration entered the back of an

auditorium as New York's Selective Service chief spoke. As heads turned to see the commotion, someone in the front row placed a lemon meringue pie in the Colonel's face. In Wichita, Kansas SDS demonstrators panicked 15 South Vietnamese provincial chiefs touring the United States. For fear that SDSers would kill them, the U.S.- sponsored "dignitaries" refused to get off their tour bus. And at Berkeley, someone molotov cocktailed ROTC headquarters. Similar demonstrations and protests occurred at dozens of schools. From December 1967 to early April 1968, SDS chapters organized anti-draft and anti-war rallies and demonstrations at Wayne State University in Detroit; Utica, New York; the University of Arizona, Tucson; New York's New School for Social Research; the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor; University of Texas at Austin; the University of North Carolina, Duke and North Carolina State, all in Raleigh; Michigan State University, East Lansing; and Cornell. Students at Syracuse University, NY, the University of Florida in Gainesville, the University of Illinois, Chicago campus, Notre Dame and San Diego State College all chased or attempted to block Dow recruiters; at the State University of NY, Albany, students physically blocked Dow recruiters from their work for an entire day. Students at Bucknell University at Lewisburg, Pa. sought to prevent Marines from recruiting on their campus; and at U Mass, Amherst, students sought to prevent army recruiters from setting up shop. At the University of Arizona, Tucson, SDS led a demonstration against Dean Rusk's appearance on campus while SDS led coordinated demonstrations at Penn State, Princeton, Columbia, the University of Chicago and the University of Michigan against the university-affiliated war research centers on their campuses, the Institute for Defense Analyses. In Chicago SDS groups scheduled a protest of an honorary doctorate to be conferred upon Secretary of State Dean Rusk. On the day before the event, Rusk unexpectedly canceled his visit. At the University of Chicago, university officials sought to sneak Vice President Hubert Humphrey onto campus for a talk. Despite the University efforts at concealing the event, SDS mobilized 400 protesters within hours, making Humphrey's stay on the campus uncomfortable.

[78]. Randy Furst. "It was Cold-Blooded Murder." *New Left Notes.* February 26, 1968. pp.1, 6. Karen Gellen. "we made the news today oh boy..." *New Left Notes.* March 4, 1968. p.3.

[79]. Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall. *The COINTELPRO PAPERS. Documents from the FBI's Secret Wars Against Dissent in the United States.* (Boston: South End Press, 1989). Online edition. Chapter 5. pp.2-5; 17.

[80]. "Attack on Militants." *New Left Notes.* March 11, 1968. p.1.

[81]. "Attack on Militants—The Man Moves Hard: Where Are We?" *New Left Notes.* March 11, 1968. pp.1,8. The article's author might have been Les "Slim" Coleman, a Chicago SDSer with growing influence in the National Office. In its tone and its concern for the black struggle it bears Coleman's signature.

[82]. Noel Ignatin. "Learn the Lessons of U.S. History." *New Left Notes.* March 25, 1968. pp.4-5. J.H. Kagin (Ignatin's pseudonym). "White Blindspot." (New York: Osawotomie Publications, Spring 1967). Noel Ignatin is Noel Ignatiev. Rather than switch back and forth or use the name Ignatiev, I will use the name that Ignatiev himself used in the 1960s. In a recent interview with the author Ignatiev himself felt that SDS published "Learn the Lessons ..." as part of the National Office's counter to Progressive Labor's growing influence in the organization. Certainly, this may have been a consideration, even a major consideration. But so too *must have been* the reality of growing repression and SDS's disregard for that repression. PL's key program at the time was a program of "fighting racism." Of course, for PL this meant subordinating race to class and obscuring race's material and structural roots. But countering PL did not necessarily mean countering PL's old left analysis of race. The left is replete with struggles in which different factions retain virtually identical analyses and split over who will be in charge of "leading." SDS could well have shared PL's line and still have carried out a struggle against PL—ERAP was not significantly different than PL, nor, as we've seen, was the Gottlieb/Gilbert/Tenney proposal. That SDS's National Office chose to counter PL with Ignatin's line shows that more was at stake for SDS leaders than *who* would lead SDS and how PL would be countered.

[83]. Resolution on "Racism." *New Left Notes.* April 8, 1968. p.5.

[84]. David Caute. *The Year of the Barricades : A Journey through 1968.*

(New York: Harper & Row, 1988.) p.145.

[85]. "We Made the News Today, Oh Boy." *New Left Notes.* April 15, 1968. p.3. Other cities also saw major actions: in Albuquerque, NM, in one of the "largest demonstrations" in the city's history, students rallied in memory of Dr. King. At MSU in East Lansing, Michigan, students sat-in at the administration building demanding black history courses, equal hiring practices and university sanctions against companies that discriminated against black people. At Northwestern University students demanded open housing ordinances in Evanston, Illinois; desegregation of university owned real estate; university contributions to the poor people's campaign; and the establishment of a joint student-faculty committee to "deal with racism at the university."

[86]. Sale. p.435. James Simon Kunen. *The Strawberry Statement.* (New York: Random House, 1969.) p.14.

[87]. Mark Rudd. "Columbia: Notes on the Spring Rebellion." in Oglesby. pp.294-6.

[88]. "Oakland Police Attack Panthers." *New Left Notes.* April 15, 1968. pp.1,7. Note here that in early April 1968 *New Left Notes* was reporting that police harassment of the Panthers had intensified eight months previously. The Panthers and the new left thus had a clear sense of the August 1967 COINTELPRO program, without ever having seen an FBI memo. Of course, at the time, mainstream commentators labeled such charges "paranoid" and condemned Panther gangsterism as the real problem.

[89]. Philip S. Foner, ed. *The Black Panthers Speak.* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970.) p.xxi.

[90]. And not only young blacks. Chicanos in California formed a Panther-like group, the Brown Berets; Puerto Ricans in New York and Chicago founded The Young Lords Organization on Panther-type lines; and Asian students founded the *I Wor Kuen.* SDS organizers even founded a poor white complement to the Panthers—the Young Patriots.

[91]. Eldridge Cleaver. *Post-Prison Writings and Speeches*. (New York: A Ramparts Book, 1969.) pp.35-6. reprinted from *Ramparts*, June 15, 1968.

[92]. All of this is not to deny the many problems of the Panther leadership. See David Hilliard's autobiography for a good account of both the Panthers' strengths and weaknesses. David Hilliard and Lewis Cole. *This Side of Glory. The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party.* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1993.) It is not my intention to enter into a discussion of the Panthers' many shortcomings here. The Panther leadership, especially, had serious problems with drugs, came to see its "vanguard" role in a way that exempted it from criticism and thus led to irreconcilable splits, and had a sharp learning curve in front of it in regards the role of women. Though these shortcomings ultimately contributed, perhaps decisively, to the Panthers' downfall, the U.S. government violently attached the Panthers not for what they were doing wrong, but for what they were doing right, i.e., their persuasive analysis of U.S. society and their militant defense of the black community. In short, the government targeted the Panthers for annihilation in order to destroy their strengths.

[93]. Huey Newton. "A Prison Interview" in Oglesby's *The New Left Reader.* pp.227-8, 229, 240. Todd Gitlin, in his diatribe against the New Left, *The Sixties, Years of Hope, Days of Rage,* described Newton's prison interview in characteristic fashion: "In a series of prison interviews widely circulated in the movement press, Huey Newton—*primed with reading matter by white leftists*—discoursed fluidly about socialism, anticolonialism, anti-imperialism, and world revolution." p.349. [my emphasis]. People could quite correctly charge Huey and the Panthers with many things, but needing the white left to shape the Panther rhetoric is not one of those things. Apparently, twenty years later, Gitlin could not conceive of Huey's having a powerful enough mind to have arrived at his understandings of revolution independently of white leftists. In fact, the Panthers "primed" the new left and shaped the new left's rhetoric. But even when Gitlin sees evil, whites must be more central to his account than blacks.

[94]. Oglesby had been SDS president in the 1965-1966 school year, had

led SDS in its growing understanding of corporate liberalism and imperialism, and had recently completed and published an important book on the topic, *Containment and Change.*

[95]. Bernardine Dohrn. "White Mother Country Radicals." *New Left Notes.* July 29, 1968. p.1, 5.

[96]. Cleaver. p.78. Huey explains the concept more completely in his prison interview. pp.231-3.

[97]. Sale. p.263-4.

[98]. "Fight Racism; Build a Worker-Student Alliance; Smash Imperialism." Resolution passed by the December 1968 National Council meeting. *New Left Notes.* January 8, 1969. p.4.

[99]. Carl Oglesby. "An Open Letter: Dear McCarthy Supporters." *New Left Notes.* August 19, 1968. p.2.

[100]. Thomas Powers. *Diana, Portrait of a Terrorist.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin: 1971.) p.102.

[101]. Terry Robbins and Bill Ayers. "Give it a name/ Call it SDS/ join us." *New Left Notes.* October 7, 1968. p.4.

[102]. Mike Klonsky. "Toward a Revolutionary Youth Movement." *New Left Notes.* December 23, 1968. p.3; Howie Machtinger. "Analysis of the youth movement." *New Left Notes.* January 22, 1969. p.7.

[103]. Connie Ullman. "San Francisco State shut down." *New Left Notes.* November 19, 1968. p.1.

[104]. Sale. p.535-6.

[105]. "We made the news today..." *New Left Notes.* January 15, 1969. p.2; January 29, 1969. p.3; February 5, 1969. p.1; February 12, 1969. p.3; February 21, 1969. p.7; February 28, 1969, p.7; March 7, 1969. p.1; March 20, 1969. p.6-7; April 24, 1969.

[106]. Southern California Regional Council. "Relationships to black and brown movements." *New Left Notes*. February 28, 1969. p.8.

[107]. "Strike Over but Struggle Goes On." Interview with Tony Miranda, Nesbit Crutchfield and Mason Wong. *The Movement*. May 1969. pp.16-7.

[108]. Mike Klonsky. "The White Question." *New Left Notes*. March 20, 1969. p.12.

[109]. *New York Times*. Online Index.

[110]. Bill Ayers and Jim Mellen. "Hot town: summer in the city, or, I ain't gonna work on Maggie's farm no more." *New Left Notes*. April 5, 1969. p.8.

[111]. Marilyn Katz, Chicago Regional SDS. "May Day Proposal." *New Left Notes*. March 20, 1969. p.10.

[112]. Les Coleman and Chicago Regional SDS. "The Schools Must Serve the People." *New Left Notes*. March 20, 1969. p.4-5.

[113]. Ed Jennings, Chicago Circle Campus SDS. "The Black Panther Party: toward the liberation of the colony." *New Left Notes*. April 5, 1969. p.3.

[114]. Clayton Van Lydegraf. "Reply to Mellen." *New Left Notes*. June 6, 1969. p.8.

[115]. Karin Ashley, Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, John Jacobs, Jeff Jones, Gerry Long, Howie Machtinger, Jim Mellen, Terry Robbins, Mark Rudd, Steve Tappis. "You don't need a Weatherman to know which way the wind blows." *New Left Notes*. June 18, 1969. pp.3-8.

[116]. Mike Klonsky, Noel Ignatin, Sue Eanet, Les Coleman. "Revolutionary Youth Movement II." *New Left Notes*. July 8, 1969. pp.5, 9.

[117]. Churchill and Vander Wall. Chapter 5. Part II. p.1.

[118]. Philip Foner, ed. "Introduction." *The Black Panthers Speak.* (New York: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1970.) p.xxvi.

[119]. Churchill and Vander Wall. Chapter 5. Part II. p.21.

[120]. Arlene Eisen Bergman. "panther's struggle is the people's struggle." *The Movement.* October 1969. p.3.

[121]. Carl Davidson. "Why SDS Expelled PL." Educational Packet prepared for the United Front against Fascism Conference. July 24, 1969. Re-printed from the *National Guardian.*

[122]. Mark Rudd, Jeff Jones, Bill Ayers, Mike Klonsky, Bob Avakian, Noel Ignatin, Howie Machtinger, Phoebe Hirsch. "NIC Statement on UFAF." *New Left Notes.* July 24, 1969. p.2-3.

[123]. Susan Stern. *With the Weathermen. The Personal Journey of a Revolutionary Woman.* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975.) pp.66-7.

[124]. Motor City SDS. "Break on Through to the Other Side." *New Left Notes.* August 29, 1969. p.4.

[125]. Kathy Boudin, Bernardine Dohrn, Terry Robbins. "Bringing the War Back Home, Less Talk, More National Action." *New Left Notes.* August 23, 1969. p.6; David Hilliard and Lewis Cole. *This Side of Glory. The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party.* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1993.) p.258.

[126]. Mike Klonsky. "Why I Quit." *New Left Notes.* August 29, 1969. p.2.

[127]. Bill Ayers. "A Strategy to Win." *New Left Notes.* September 12, 1969. p.3.

[128]. Baldwin. p.141.

[129]. Staughton Lynd. "Towards a History of the New Left." in Priscilla Long, ed. *The New Left, A Collection of Essays.* (Boston: Porter Sargent,

1969.) p.8.

[130]. Caute. p.37. Anti-colonial struggles played the same role in Europe as the black struggle in the United States, with the proviso that America's new left had far more intimate connections with the black struggle than did Europeans have with anti-colonial struggles.

[131]. Franz Fanon. "Algeria Face to Face with the French Torturers." Toward the African Revolution. (New York: Grove Press, 1967.) pp.67, 70-71.

[132]. Baldwin. p.130.

I Become a Political Traitor

BY SARA LITTLECROW-RUSSELL

Shopping list, coupons, and unbleached canvas bags in hand
I firmly grasp a cart with no wobbly wheels
and stride across the parking lot.
I am unstoppable, I am a woman with a goal:
veggies, meat, milk, cereal, coffee, eggs, fruit—
everything on my list in thirty minutes or less.

I enter the store and am confronted with
a looming tower of fragrant, luscious, ripe, red,
perfectly unblemished strawberries.
The saliva fountains up, but I have to ask
"Are they union picked?"
The produce guy ignores me.

Around the corner is the lettuce—
"Are these union too?"
He rolls his eyes,
"Jeez, lady, I'm union. Don't that make a difference?"
"Yeah, your boss gives you a bathroom to use."
Even my thoughts are small.

I skip the apples.
According to the latest list that
Greenpeace shoved under my door,
if I want to avoid toxins
I'm supposed to eat thick-skinned fruit,

Sara Littlecrow-Russell is a graduate of Hampshire College and single mother, who works in support of political prisoners, welfare rights/economic justice, and indigenous land struggles.

except I remember that documentary
where Dole Corporation was starving
Indonesian farmers off their ancestral land
so I pick through the yellow landslide
searching fruitlessly for a bunch of bananas without
DOLE stickered on them.

Suddenly my will power melts
under the sweet torture of the strawberries
and I stuff a pint in the corner of my cart.
Next on my list is meat
so I get some mysterious chicken parts wrapped in oozing
plastic
decorated with cartoons of happy, fat chickens
and try not to think about the flyers PETA shoved under my
door—
drugs, disease, factory farming, slaughterhouses.

The cereal aisle looms bright and beckoning.
Okay, what was it—Nestle, bad. General Mills, good.
Or was it the other way around?
Damn I can't remember which one I'm supposed to boycott.
Oatmeal, now there's a compromise—
hopefully there's not too many pesticides in this,
hopefully not too many small farms went under
to large-scale oat-farming agribusiness,
hopefully my karma won't
make me come back as a cockroach.

Coffee, coffee, must have my caffeine!
Wait! I don't want my $3.59 spent on a cash crop export
to collapse an entire third world economic system.
Then again I don't want to have a headache every day this
week.

I complete my mission with
a quart of milk from a BGH-inflated cow

and a dozen brown eggs
fresh from the battery farm where
they put the chickens under lights 24 hours a day
until they lay themselves to death
and then grind the dead bodies to feed the rest.

Standing in line waiting for
the sullen clerk to ring my order
I scavenge the bottom of my bag
for every last coin and pray—

forgive me insect,
forgive me chicken,
forgive me cow,
forgive me farmworker,
forgive me small farmer,
forgive me trees,
forgive me plants,
forgive me water,
forgive me world,
forgive me for being too poor
to buy my food in the health food store.

ABOLITION AND THE NEW SOCIETY

...the primary creative force will be the collective actions of the mass seeking to solve the great social problems which face them in their daily lives. Intellect will play a high role, higher than ever, but it will be the intellectual activities of millions of men, dealing with realities. Intellectuals will be of use to the extent that they recognize the new forces but as a class they will recognize it only when they see and feel the new force. The role that they played between 1200 and today will be over, because the condition of that role, the passive subordinate mass, will be undergoing liquidation in the very action of the mass which will be creating a totally new society, an active integrated humanism. The ideas demanded and the will to achieve them unfold one from the other, and with the consciousness of power, ideas, hopes, wishes, long-suppressed, because thought unattainable, but now come into the open—that is the process... But the great masses become abolitionist now; themselves to wipe away the conditions of their own slavery. These cannot be abolished by anyone else.

C.L.R. James

It seems to me the idea of our civilization, underlying all American life, is that men do not need any guardian. Not only the inevitable, but the best power this side of the ocean, is the unfettered average common sense of the masses. Institutions, as we are accustomed to calling them, are but pasteboard, and intended to be, against the thought of the street.

Wendell Phillips

The time has come to reconsider the original premises of what has come to be known as the new abolitionist project. Thus far, that project (not yet ten years old) has attracted a good deal of media and academic attention, has influenced a number of national discussions on race, has sharpened debates in at least some quarters and has earned a sympathetic hearing among relatively large groups of anti-white supremacist audiences. At the same time, since the initiators of the project

The editors wrote this statement in consultation with Chris Niles and Joel Olson, aided by correspondence with other abolitionists.

had always intended to be guided by the axiom that "the point was to change it," the project thus far must be considered only a very partial success. Frankly, we had hoped that, by this time, supporters of our project would have been able to establish functioning new abolitionist chapters across the country and that those chapters would have been able to develop effective public projects embodying abolitionist politics. This has not happened.

We have some questions for ourselves and for those we imagine to be more or less critical supporters. Is abolitionism sufficient for the development of a new insurgency—an insurgency that might resume where the insurgency of the 1960s left off? Is it capable of making a decisive contribution to the return of dreams of unqualified human freedom to the popular political imagination?

Race Traitor, characterized by its founding editors as the "journal of the new abolitionism," was launched in the fall of 1992. What follows reconstructs the political history of the project, evaluates its contribution and potential, and invites others to respond and to join in what might become a new project.

Since the initial publication of the journal, the editors and a relatively small number of associates have attempted to articulate an abolitionist vision for an American revolution. They did so in the context of an observation that almost all on the left who had imagined the necessity or desirability of social revolution in the 1960s and early 1970s had abandoned that goal and they hoped that a new articulation, in a distinctively American idiom, might contribute to a rebirth of radical activism.

The following are essential elements of the vision:

- race was an historical and social construction and had no biological reality;
- the white "race" was composed of individuals who partook of the advantages of the white skin;
- the advantages of the white skin were universal and substantial and led even the most downtrodden whites to ally themselves with their rulers;
- the white race needed to be abolished if we hoped to make progress in the country's social life;
- abolitionism was not anti-racism since anti-racism implicitly admitted the existence of races; in addition, anti-racism tended to reduce the necessary struggle to a struggle over the content of the ideas in people's heads rather than over the circumstances that gave rise to

those ideas; furthermore, anti-racism often focused on groups like the Nazis and the Klan or conservative politicians as the perpetrators of racism; instead, we argued that race was reproduced by the principal institutions of society—the schools, the labor market, the law, the family *and* was reinforced by reform programs;

- the existence of the white race required the all but unanimous support of its members;
- the defection of enough "whites" would lead to the collapse of the white race and, by extension, would lead to a profound challenge to the entirety of the established social order;
- most white folks were not deeply nor consciously committed to white supremacy nor were they primarily motivated by prejudice.

In addition, we have:

- reasserted the new abolitionist project's connection to nineteenth-century abolitionism and to the politics of John Brown;
- expressed an appreciation for the essential contributions made to the American freedom struggle by Afro-Americans;
- associated ourselves with the conviction that the ordinary people of the nation were prepared to rule the society;
- acknowledged the potential and the limitations of cultural "crossovers"—whites who embraced and/or became participants in traditional and contemporary black cultural practices;
- asserted that "a new world, and nothing less, is worth fighting for." At the same time we never detailed what this new world might be like. This refusal in part reflected our reluctance to be associated with those who saw the new society as a series of ever more ambitious five year plans, in part our realization that many poets and revolutionaries in the past had suggested ways of imagining the future more beautifully than we might, and in part our conviction that the new world would be made by the people who created it and could not be predicted;
- developed a critique of whiteness studies (embodying critiques of post-modernism and multi-culturalism as political positions that reflected despair over the possibility of radical change);
- argued that whiteness was primarily made and re-made by those who wanted to be white and was not foisted upon them by clever rulers;
- argued that various "new" immigrants were in the process of being incorporated as whites, and opposed analyses informed by a view of the U.S. as a "multiracial" society;

- suggested that whiteness was analogous to European social democracy in the sense that it represented an accommodation by some of the exploited to their continuing exploitation at the expense of still others of the exploited;
- recognized that the privileges of whiteness had been eroded during the last twenty-five years and that the erosion had occurred simultaneously with the erosion of social democracy;
- qualified our estimate of the erosion of whiteness with an appreciation of the significance of what might be considered "sedimented" social relations—insofar as they, for example, contributed to continuing inequalities in wealth between white and black while income differentials tended to decline;
- recognized that the turns to the right that had occurred in both the US and Europe were, in part, the result of these erosions of privileges but, unlike some others, we insisted on the importance of distinctions between what might be considered the conservatives and the fascist revolutionaries;
- reaffirmed a conviction that the appeal of the fascists would not likely be countered by a defense of the institutions and, to the chagrin of some, argued that relying on the state to defeat the fascists would only strengthen the state and, ultimately, the fascists themselves;
- welcomed and published the views of those who argued that "white" rebels had perhaps shed some of their whiteness in the course of their rebellion.

A Balance Sheet

Looking back upon this record, we believe that much of what we have said appears sound. Nonetheless, there are some shortcomings:

- We failed to take account of the full significance of what might be considered a world-historical break in 1973—a break that initiated real development in what had until then appeared to be a permanently undeveloped third world, the de-industrialization of a substantial part of what had previously been the industrial bases of the capitalist world system, the rebuilding of central American cities (concomitant with gentrification) and the incorporation of Afro-Americans into the ruling strata of the United States.
- We too infrequently acknowledged the ways in which we saw ourselves as the inheritors of what might be considered the Johnsonite

tradition in American politics. That tradition was begun by C.L.R. James (using the pseudonym of J.R. Johnson) and other colleagues in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Its distinguishing elements can be summarized as follows: (1) a challenge to the existing order will develop as a result of the self-activity of the workers by which they will overcome internal barriers to their development as a potential ruling class (and not as the result of the work of political vanguards); (2) a deep appreciation of America as the country where the development of the productive forces (including both the means of production and the workers) was most advanced; (3) an appreciation of the centrality of the black struggle to the self-realization of the proletariat.

- Although we have said that our aim was not racial harmony but class war, we have not managed to project effectively our view that whiteness was the key "internal barrier" to be overcome in the process of proletarian self-development and that our abolitionism was directly connected to our revolutionary vision. As a result, we have attracted support from individuals who would be upset if they understood the implications of our undertaking. Those individuals include some people who retain deeply held convictions about the unfulfilled promise of the American system and others who oppose all forms of discriminatory thought and behavior (for example, those who oppose "classism" as much as they oppose "racism").
- We were unprepared for the emergence of the new anti-globalization movement and have found ourselves to be relatively insignificant external commentators on its strengths and weaknesses. We would not want to underestimate this failure. While people in the hundreds, if not thousands, were prepared to confront directly the organized power of the state, we had no role to play. Those activists may be unaware of important political matters but they were the ones taking the risks and there were precious few abolitionists or revolutionaries from other traditions alongside them.
- We were also unprepared for the extent of the erosion of white privilege and the concomitant appearance of blacks in positions of authority within traditionally white-dominated institutions.
- We have not yet fully understood the significance of the erosion of whiteness being done to the working class and not by it. We also did not reconsider whether our "all or nothing" characterization of the white race had stood the test of time. Put it this way: what did it mean if some were no longer white but the white race had not collapsed?

- We have developed only the most tentative of programmatic demands that might serve as the basis for the development of more or less sustained popular campaigns.

Abolitionism and the New Society

We need to reconsider abolitionism one more time. We hope that it is clear that we fully understand that the great mass of the abolitionists consisted of the slaves, the runaways and the free blacks who worked tirelessly in more or less open fashion to destroy slavery. Abolitionism was the first great moment of black liberation in this country. Then, as later, it served to inspire others not oppressed as blacks to join together with the oppressed in a common struggle for freedom and, more or less simultaneously, to embrace dreams of a new world—a world without fixed gender identities, a world characterized by new understandings of the relationship between the individual and the society, a world infused with a new understanding of the spiritual, and so forth. Consistent with the Johnsonite tradition, we believe this was no accident. In spite of the fact that the Afro-Americans were branded as no other Americans were, they nonetheless became the most fully American and, when they engaged in popular struggle, gave expression to the deepest desires of the larger American population:

> *The great unsatisfied desire of the American population is for social organization, free association. for common social ends. It is the only means whereby the powerful and self-destroying individualism can find fulfillment. The Americans are the most highly self-organized people on earth. Every city, every suburb, every hamlet, has organizations of some sort, Elks, Shriners, Rotarians, clubs for everything under the sum. But the Negroes are the most highly organized of Americans. Government statistics show that of some 14 million Negroes in the United States, over 10 million are listed as belonging to some organization. Whatever the variety of these organizations every one has openly or implicitly as part of its program the emancipation of the Negro people. (James)*

On the one hand, the blacks are those who express the desire of all for all and, on the other, they are the people who are often denied everything that is given to everyone else. The contradiction is an excruciating one:

> *Thus, on all the basic economic and political problems of the*

> *day, the Negro, segregated as he is, is an integral part of American life. And it is this contradiction between this fundamental need for complete and total integration demanded by the whole modern development in conflict with the powerful interests which demand and perpetuate segregation that lies the sharpness and the intolerable strains of the whole Negro question. (James)*

So long as the issue is not confronted directly and completely, things endlessly appear to become better and worse at the same time.

> *...the fact above all which so demoralizes the modern world, that the greater the efforts made, the more terrible are the new forms in which the old social problems reappear. (James)*

So, What To Do?

From the beginning we have drawn support from many who, whether they call themselves communists, anarchists, surrealists, or something else, consider themselves revolutionaries. If abolitionism without a vision of a new society is incomplete, the new society without abolitionism is impossible. It follows that we unequivocally welcome the erosion of whiteness no matter what quarter it comes from, and oppose any attempts to respond to the relative weakening of the white position by rearticulating a new whiteness.

We would like to invite those who read this reconsideration and believe that it represents, however imperfectly and incompletely, a useful starting point to get in touch with us, to write in response, to come together in more or less formal meetings to discuss what we have written and to think seriously about the possibility of developing a new political project that preserves and transcends the new abolitionist one. We are especially interested in hearing from those who were active on the streets of Seattle, Washington, Philadelphia and Los Angeles.

Race Ethnicity and Education

INCREASE IN FREQUENCY IN 2000

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